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ST. PAUL:
HIS LIFE AND TIMES.

BY

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PREFACE.

IT is scarcely possible for me to enumerate all the works I have consulted in the course of preparing this book. The chief sources are, of course, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul. I have referred to the Articles on St. Paul in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," in Smith's "Bible Dictionary," in Schenkel's "Bibel-Lexicon," and in Herzog-Platt "Real-Encyclopædie." Of the Commentaries, I have consulted Meyer, Godet, Edwards, Beet, Lightfoot, and others. Of Lives of St. Paul, I have used those of Baur, Renan, Conybeare and Howson, Ewald, and the little work, "St. Paul and the Heathen World," published by the S.P.C.K. I am specially indebted, though largely in the way of dissent, to Weizsäcker, "Das Apostolische Zeitalter"; and Hausrath, "Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte," I have found useful and suggestive. The Introductions to the New Testament used are those of Holtzman, Weiss, Salmon, and Dods. Other obligations are acknowledged in their respective places.

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CHAPTER I.

YOUTH AND EDUCATION.

Tarsus, its commerce and its learning—Its religion—St. Paul's home—His father a Roman citizen—His name—His training at Jerusalem—Gamaliel—The time of his residence at Jerusalem—The progress of the Church—Stephen—Saul's relation to the Christian Church—Dispute with Stephen—His defence—His martyrdom—Saul the Pharisee—His religious experience as a Pharisee—His animosity against the Church—His mental state—His persecution of the Church.

IN one of his letters St. Paul describes himself as “of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee.”¹ He was born at Tarsus in Cilicia, a place of which he was wont to speak with some consciousness of its importance. It was in his eyes “no mean city.”² We need not suppose that this statement is coloured by the partiality of a native, for there is ample evidence that as a geographical and trading centre, and as a seat of learning, it was, in fact, no mean city. Its situation was favourable ; a navigable stream gave direct access to the Mediterranean ; it had communication on the one hand with Syria, and on the other with the lands beyond the Taurus, and its trade was therefore considerable. As a boy St. Paul must have often watched the rafts of timber, which, hewn in the forests of the Taurus, and floated down the river, were sent to the dockyards or other places as required. Here, too, he must have seen bales of goods, which, having the names and marks of the owners on them, lay on the quays. How profound an impression the busy

¹ Phil. iii. 5.

² Acts xxi. 39.

mercantile life of Tarsus made on his young mind may be gathered from the fact that his style, his mode of thought, and almost all his metaphors and illustrations are drawn from it.

Nor is this the only debt he owed to Tarsus. We know from Strabo¹ that Greek learning greatly flourished in Tarsus at this time. It is scarcely to be supposed that he should have lived in such a city without sharing the culture and the learning for which it was celebrated. We know that he spoke and thought in Greek with great ease and accuracy; and that such ease comes only to one who has practised the use of the language from infancy, and to whom it has become part of his mental life. No one could have spoken the speech given by St. Paul on Mars Hill if he had not had a perfect acquaintance with the spirit of Greek life and thought. Occasionally, too, he shows an acquaintance with obscure parts of Greek literature which is remarkable, and can use sentences from them with great effect. Witness the verse quoted by him to the men of Athens "For we are also His offspring,"² and also the passage about the Cretans.³ There is no evidence, indeed, that he was a student in the schools of Tarsus, or that he had made a systematic study of the masterpieces of Greek literature. Rather there is evidence to the contrary. But what an observant boy could gather from intercourse with others, and what he could absorb of the atmosphere in which he moved, so much, no doubt, was acquired by one so sympathetic and impressionable as he was. It was fitting that he whose life-work lay among strange people, in many unfriendly cities, should have begun his life and spent his boyhood in a place where so many opposing influences met, so many diverse interests were at stake, and so many kinds of people were to be seen. It was fitting, also, that he who was to be the bearer and the messenger of a religion suited to all men, fitted to meet and satisfy all human needs, should have seen with his own eyes and felt in his own life the pressure of pagan religions as all who lived at Tarsus must have felt them.

For with regard to religion Tarsus was a typical city. Many religions met in it. It is not necessary that we should describe them here; enough to say that in Tarsus, as in some other cities of the Roman Empire, religion practically had become a mixture of strange and incongruous elements. Here might be found the

¹ Strabo, "Geography," xiv. 5, 13.

² Acts xvii. 28.

³ Titus i. 12.

fearful rites—rites of the most detestable licentiousness, and of the most awful asceticism which belong to the religion of the heathen Semites. Here, too, were representatives of the religious beliefs of pagan Greece, and of the religions of Northern Syria. Nor were there lacking influences emanating from Babylon and Egypt, along with the influences coming from imperial Rome, now on the highway toward the worship of the emperors. Enough that before his eyes throughout his boyhood, Paul saw a living picture of the intellectual, moral, and social effects which spring from heathenism. How disastrous these results were, and how keenly he felt them, may be gathered from a perusal of the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Even in his boyhood he must have longed to turn men from idols to the service of the Living God.

While his residence during boyhood in a pagan city, amid such surroundings, must have formed a large element in his training, yet the decisive influence which ruled his young life must be sought elsewhere. Unlike so many of his kinsmen, both before his time and since, Paul did not yield himself to the influence of Greek thought and life. He was ever an Hebrew of the Hebrews, and his training was of the true Hebrew sort. In what circumstances his parents were we do not know, nor at what time they had come to Tarsus. Perhaps earlier ancestors of his had come to the flourishing city, and had attained to wealth and position in it. At all events Paul's father had attained to the dignity of a Roman citizen—a dignity Paul did not hesitate to claim when there was need.¹ Nothing can be inferred with regard to his poverty or wealth from the fact that he had learnt a trade, for that was a universal Jewish custom. He does not seem, however, to have had command of wealth. It is not said of him, as it is said of Barnabas, that "having a field, he sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."² Nor was much wealth needed in order that he might pursue the calling on which his mind was bent. The absence of wealth did not prevent men from attaining to the highest distinction as teachers of the law. The trade he learned was a natural one for a person of Cilician birth, as the hair of the Cilician goat was used to make a cloth which was specially adapted for tents for travellers, merchants, and soldiers.

¹ Acts xvi. 38 ; xxii. 25, *et passim*.

² Ibid. iv. 37.

Many conjectures have been made regarding the name he assumed and used in all his writings. In the Acts of the Apostles he is called Saul up to the time of the conversion of Sergius Paulus. Then, somewhat abruptly, it is said, "Saul, who is also called Paul ;"¹ after which statement he is always called Paul. It was natural that a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin should be called Saul, as it was the name of the first king of Israel, but why he was called Paul we can scarcely determine. Some think he took the name of his first great Gentile convert ; others that he assumed it in reference either to the smallness of his stature or to his being "the least of the apostles ;" and others again—and this is the most likely solution—that he had a double name from the first. His name, Paul, was not uncommon in Syria, and in the eastern parts of Asia Minor. The question is more curious than important, and need not detain us longer.

We do not know exactly when he came to Jerusalem. Luke calls him a young man at the time of the stoning of Stephen, but among the Jews a man was reckoned a young man till he was thirty years of age. It may have been that the whole family had moved from Tarsus to Jerusalem while he was yet a young man. We find that the son of his sister was an inhabitant of Jerusalem.² At all events he was a dweller at Jerusalem for a number of years. He had had time to make himself completely master of the learning to be obtained in the rabbinical schools at Jerusalem. He was brought up "at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of the Jews."³ A notice in the Acts of the Apostles tells us that Gamaliel was "a doctor of the law, had in honour of all the people."⁴ Both from his own learning and character, and from his being the grandson of Hillel, he held the foremost place among the theologians at Jerusalem. To him Paul had come, and at his feet he sat for many years. The master and pupil seemed most unlike each other. Gamaliel was liberal-minded, large-hearted, tolerant ; all accounts of his sayings and doings are of the same kind as the speech he is recorded to have made to the Sanhedrin, a report of which is contained in the Acts of the Apostles. This speech contains most elevated and liberal sentiments, and manifests a firm faith in the provi-

¹ Acts xiii. 9.

³ Ibid. xxii. 3.

² Ibid. xxiii. 16.

⁴ Ibid. v. 34.

dence of God. No wiser counsel could have been given than the following : "Refrain from these men, and let them alone : for if this counsel or this work be of man, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God."¹ This wise, calm, and tolerant spirit was as different as possible from the fiery zeal and impetuous intolerance which Saul manifested against the Christian Church. What the youthful Saul had got from his teacher was not apparently the mild wisdom of his practical good sense, but the knowledge of the law, a minute acquaintance with the traditions of the elders, and a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and of the current methods of interpretation. How minute and extensive that knowledge was, every Epistle he wrote bears witness. He quotes from all parts of the Scriptures. From the Pentateuch, from the Psalter, and from the Prophets he quotes in such a way as to prove that he had mastered their contents and was at home with them. The quotations also show that the original Hebrew was as familiar to him as the Greek translation. He had thrown himself with an ardent thirst for knowledge upon the learning of the schools, and outstripped all his contemporaries both in the knowledge of, and in zeal for the law. "I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers."² We need not enter at any length into a discussion of the kind of learning he obtained in the school of Gamaliel, nor say anything either of the views which obtained there, or of the methods by which they were attained and defended. It is enough to note that Saul had mastered the learning Gamaliel had to teach, that he was held in estimation and thoroughly trusted by the rulers of his people. He had exhausted what Judaism had to give him. He had mastered all its learning, had entered fully into its moral and religious spirit; and when he was suddenly lifted out of it, it had nothing further to give him.

It is likely that he was in Jerusalem during the lifetime of our Lord on earth. It is possible, indeed, that he may have been present during one of Jesus Christ's periodical visits to Jerusalem. Though the main stress of the contrast set forth in the passage, "even though we have known Christ after the

¹ Acts v. 35-39.

² Gal. i. 14.

flesh, yet now we know Him so no more,"¹ is laid on the distinction between carnal and spiritual knowledge, there is nothing in it to exclude the literal meaning. He may have seen the Lord in the flesh, and seen Him before the crucifixion. This is unimportant, however, as, if he had seen the Lord, he lays no stress on it, never boasts of a knowledge of this kind.

Of more importance is it to notice that the existence of the Christian Church must for a long time have attracted his attention. Thousands of Jews had been won to faith in the Crucified One, and had become members of the Christian Church. No doubt many of these were Jews of the Dispersion, and had speedily returned to their homes in other lands. But many were dwellers in Jerusalem, for we find that "the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."² Though a keen and devoted student, and though much occupied, no doubt, with the questions of the schools, Saul was too active, too much in sympathy with his fellow-men, not to have known of the existence, character, and claims of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. The Apostles spoke boldly in the temple; the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah were discussed in the synagogues; and the new faith was not disposed to hide in a corner. Nay, Saul himself may have been one of the disputants; or if too young to speak in the synagogue, he may have been one of those present at the disputes with Stephen which took place in the synagogue. What more likely than that Saul was wont to frequent that particular synagogue which was called "the synagogue of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia"?³ Saul had joined himself to the strictest sect of the Pharisees, composed of men who had been formerly in revolt against the Roman power, and who now, with determined energy, set themselves to interpret the law in the strictest and most rigid way, and to enforce it on all if they could. By strict observance of the law they hoped to revive the ancient faith and the ancient glory of Israel. Sharing these hopes, and being a Pharisee of the Pharisees, Saul must have been simply shocked and astonished beyond measure, both at the strange doctrines set forth by Stephen, and at the skill and

¹ 2 Cor. v. 16.

² Acts vi. 7.

³ Ibid. vi. 9.

boldness with which he defended them. From the account in the Acts of the Apostles it seems clear that Saul, who was present at the death of Stephen, and was also a listener to his defence, must have been present at the dispute in the synagogue which gave rise to these events. Nor can we say for how long a time he had known of this new sect. The fiery zeal, which suddenly sprang to such intensity of persecution, must have been slumbering for a long time, and must have been fed by many bitter feelings and grudges against those who had fallen, as he must have thought, from the ancient faith of their fathers.

Again, changes were taking place within the Christian community. For some time the Christian Church had been content to add their new article of faith to the beliefs they had as Israelites. They were Jews, with the difference that they believed in Jesus as the Messiah. That Jesus lived, had risen from the dead, and "was exalted a prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel and the remission of sins," this they steadfastly believed, and in this they rejoiced. But they had not yet reflected on the meaning and bearing of this new belief, nor seen what revolutionary changes were involved in it and what destructive effects it would have on all existing relationships. They did not see—it was very difficult for them to see—that it meant the breaking-up of the old order, and the constituting of it on a new basis. They clung to the old way, observed the Jewish law, went daily to the temple, and strove to hide from themselves the essential position of antagonism in which they stood to the old order. The antagonism was bound to come to the light. The Christians might cling to the temple and its services, they might ignore as much as possible the magnitude of the change involved in their faith in Christ—but the logic of events was too strong for them. They could not prevent the more active spirits among them from thinking out the matter, and pushing it to an issue. During these first years of silent growth, mutual love and earnest self-sacrifice greatly flourished, and the community had attracted to itself many able and powerful spirits. The few disciples who had met in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost were lost amid the thousands who had since then become Christians. As they increased in numbers they naturally became less cautious, and as their hope and courage mounted, so increased also their

efforts to make others share their new belief. There were many, no doubt, who did not feel any occasion for reserve. Among these was Stephen. That he was chosen one of the Seven, shows that he had already been prominent in the Church. His office gave him additional weight and increased prominence. His work would bring him into constant contact with the people, and he was the kind of man to make the most of every opportunity.

Nor was his work limited to the Christians. He was ever active in the defence of the faith and urgent in pressing on others that they also should believe on Christ. "Full of grace and power Stephen wrought great wonders and signs among the people."¹ In the course of his energetic career he got into a dispute with those who were considered the most liberal-minded among the Jews. His opponents were not of the strictest sect, nor of the Jews who had their homes in Palestine. They were Hellenists, Libertines who had been taken to Rome as prisoners, and had obtained their freedom. They had been somewhat liberalised by their residence abroad, but they refused to believe in Christ. The dispute waxed warm. Stephen spoke out, and put forth all his strength in argument. "They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke." Defeated in open argument, they had recourse to base means in order to win the victory over Stephen. They accused him falsely; they suborned witnesses; they stirred up all who did not believe in Christ, the people, the elders, and the scribes, and brought him before the council to answer for himself. The heads of the council had long been in active opposition to the Christians, but were held in restraint by fear of the people. They were ready to act as soon as the popular breath was turned against the Christians. We have from Luke a somewhat full account both of the accusation brought against Stephen, and of his speech in defence. Luke tells us what he said, and also how he looked. When he stood before the council, knowing that any moment might bring death to him, Stephen felt so supported and sustained by Divine strength that his face shone with solemn triumph in the goodness of his cause. He is accused of speaking words against the holy place and the law: "We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth

¹ Acts vi. 8.

shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us.”¹ What will his defence be? What but to repeat again the substance of what he had maintained in the dispute with the Libertines? Thus he would not merely defend himself, but also make use of his opportunity to set forth the truth as he understood it. His defence is a new reading of the history of Israel. Since he had been a Christian he had read the Old Testament with new eyes, in the light cast on it by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament he had found no good ground for the Jewish habit of self-praise, nor for the thought in which they gloried that they were the peculiar people of God, who would continue to be the favoured people of God, irrespective of what they were or of what they did. On the contrary Stephen proved, along all the line of their history, from the time of Moses onwards, a steadfast resistance on their part to the action of Divine grace and love. They had resisted Moses, opposed him, thwarted him; they had served false gods; and his speech is brought to an abrupt conclusion with the words, “Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them which shewed before of the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers: ye who have received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not.”² The result was a sudden and violent movement on the part of the multitude. Giving way to the rage which consumed them, they hurried him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses—who were bound to cast the first stone—“laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.” It is added that “Saul was consenting unto his death.”

It was needful to give this short account of Stephen and his work, inasmuch as he is the direct predecessor of Paul. Paul took up and carried on the work which Stephen had begun. The questions and the problems of which Paul was to work out the solution had been already raised. Many of the Christians must have been pondering them deeply, and anxiously waiting for a solution. What was to be their relation to the old economy? How far was their attachment to the new faith to carry them? These became burning questions on the death

¹ Acts vi. 14.

² Ibid. vii. 52, 53.

of Stephen. The old economy cast them out. They are thrust forth from Jerusalem, they are followed into strange cities, and the influence of those in authority among the Jews was used to the uttermost against them wherever they went. The great persecution which arose against the Church which was at Jerusalem, scattered the Christians abroad, and the means taken for their suppression served only to make them increase the more.

How came the pupil of Gamaliel to take so active a part in this persecution? In many respects, indeed, he was a contrast to Gamaliel. In his youth, as in the time when he wrote the writings yet in our hands, his life was charged with emotion. He lived at high pressure. Intellectually, morally, spiritually, he was a man of intense personality, of eager, fiery, impetuous strength. He threw himself with the utmost *abandon* into the attempt to realize the Pharisaic ideal. He was so far conscious of failure. He himself draws a graphic picture of what he had tried to be, and of what he had been. That picture we have in the Epistle to the Romans. There was a time when he had lived what seemed to him a pure and guileless life, when he had no consciousness of wrong. But that time had passed away long before he had become a Christian. He was alive without the law once. While he was busy in the rabbinical schools with the words of the law, learning its distinctions and differences, dealing with it in the fashion of the schools, suddenly the commandment took new life and reality in his hands. This law was really a law of God. He had something more to do with it than merely to analyse it and classify the results of his analysis. It had something to do with his heart and life. The commandment came, and really commanded. When this was understood, resistance arose within him; sin revived and he died. The words "Thou shalt not covet," made him conscious of a boundary beyond which he ought not to pass, and roused in him an intense desire to pass it. It drew him on with a fatal, fascinating power. "Sin, finding occasion, through the commandment, beguiled me, and through it slew me." ¹ His moral nature had fallen into contradictions, and he found it impossible to restore the moral unity of his being. Even of his Pharisaic life he could say, "I delight in the law of God

¹ Rom. vii.

after the inward man ;” but the delight was powerless to control him, or obtain the mastery over his wayward impulses. “ I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members.” This feeling of moral impotence in the inward life served only as a stimulus to new endeavour, and raised in him a greater apprehension of the moral grandeur of the law of God. The mental and moral torture through which he was passing would make him resent all the more keenly every movement which seemed to overthrow the Pharisaic basis of life, and so to destroy the hope he had of eventually attaining to moral peace. Hence the keenness of his resistance to the movement of which Stephen was the chief exponent. The view which Stephen took of the history of Israel was simply intolerable to a Jew ; and if the new views taught by the Apostles and current in the Christian community were true, then the hope which Saul had built on Pharisaism was baseless. We do not wonder that he threw himself with fierce impetuosity into the work of stamping out this new faith. Persecution became to him an imperative duty. With characteristic thoroughness—moving wholly when he moved at all—he became a leader among the persecutors. Towards them he felt a very frenzy of hate. He himself says, “ I persecuted the church of God and made havock of it.”¹ “ I devastated the church ;”² and with this agrees the statement of Luke. “ Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.”³ He made a search from house to house ; if he found any of the new faith he dragged them forth to prison. Nor did his persecution stop with imprisonment. When he had brought them before the Jewish authorities he strove to make them blaspheme.⁴ No doubt he took the usual means, common in these courts, of trying to make them apostatize. When he could not make them deny their Lord, and it came to be a question of life and death, he gave his vote against them. The energy of hate, which urged him to such decisive measures, must have been of the most virulent kind. He was “ exceedingly mad against them.” In truth it was a sort of madness, and as such Luke describes it. “ He was breathing threatening and slaughter

¹ Gal. i. 14.

³ Acts viii. 3.

² Lightfoot, *in loc.*

⁴ Ibid., xxvi. 11.

against the disciples of the Lord.”¹ Hatred to them had become a kind of atmosphere to him; and the persistent search after the disciples, his cruel treatment of them when they were captured, his voting for their death, and his resolve to follow them into strange cities were but the outward acts, which fitly expressed the state of his mind. In none of the accounts do we find the least trace of any compunction on his part. He was thoroughly persuaded that he was right in this course of conduct. “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”²

Curiously enough almost every life of St. Paul contains a psychological chapter of greater or less length, descriptive of his state of mind. I do not mean to dwell on these speculations, for they seem to me to be utterly fanciful. Renan, combining the ideas of Strauss and of Baur in his earlier treatment of the subject as contained in his *Church History of the first Three Centuries*, draws out an account of what he conceives to have been the meditations of Saul on his way to Damascus. Archdeacon Farrar does not yield to Renan in his description. Well, as they have abundance of free space they have room to expatiate, and they can hardly be contradicted, at least not directly. But we may say that there is no evidence forthcoming to show that Paul felt any of the compunctions, the misgivings, the hesitations, which are so freely attributed to him. Nay, we think there is proof to the contrary. Let us, however, state this view in the words of one of the most skilful of its exponents: “We possess in the words which the Acts of the Apostles³ represents Paul as hearing from the lips of Jesus, ‘It is hard for thee to kick against the goad,’ a hint for the psychological explanation of the change. Before his conversion Paul had felt a goad in his soul, against which he vainly sought to kick. In what else can it have consisted than in the painful doubt as to the lawfulness of his persecution of the Christians—in the doubt, therefore, whether the truth was really on his side, and not, after all, on that of the persecuted disciples of Christ. But how was it possible that a doubt like this should arise in the soul of the fanatical Pharisee?”⁴ Pfeiderer’s answer is, that the martyrs’ courage in dying for their faith made him ask whether that faith was a delusion, whether this question once

¹ Acts ix. 1.

² Ibid. xxvi. 9.

³ Ibid. xxvi.

⁴ Pfeiderer, Hibbert Lecture, p. 35.

raised, would not raise other questions regarding the Messiah, and what kind of Messiah he was to be. "Was not the undeserved suffering of such a righteous servant of God as Jesus must have been, according to the delineations of His disciples, intended to be the Divinely-ordered means of rendering sinners righteous before God?" As soon as thoughts of this kind entered into his mind the citadel of his Pharisaism was already undermined. Now evidently this is a large superstructure to be built up on the interpretation of a single phrase, or rather of a single word. "It is hard for thee to kick against the goad" need mean no more than that his opposition to the Christian cause would be of no avail: as vain for him to persecute the Christians as it was for the oxen to kick against the goad. So far was he from feeling compunction, that he afterwards reckons that he was forgiven for persecuting, because he "did it ignorantly in unbelief." The notion that he was trying to drown the rebukes of conscience by energetic action seems to us to be a pure fiction, not supported by any statement in the Acts of the Apostles, nor in any statement in any of his own epistles. It is a pity, perhaps, to demand proof for such psychological disquisitions, but when these are used in order to make the conversion of St. Paul have as little significance as possible, then the issue becomes serious. When we are told that ardent men change, but are not transformed, and that all that St. Paul did was to direct his fanaticism towards another object, as Renan does, we place over against that view the statement of Paul himself, that the meeting with the Christ was to him the beginning of a new life. He was from that time a changed man, had undergone a moral and spiritual renewal.

Without further controversy on this topic, we here mention that the persecution spread from Jerusalem to Judæa and Galilee, and Saul, having done all he could against the Church in Palestine, sought new fields of operation. "He went to the high priest and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."¹ "Of the great cities which lay near Palestine Damascus was the most promising, if not the only field for such a commission. At Antioch and at Alexandria, though the Jews, who were very

¹ Acts ix. 2.

numerous, enjoyed a large measure of independence, and had their own governor, the Roman authorities would probably have interfered to prevent the extreme measures which St. Paul demanded. At Damascus, where also the Jews were numerous and had their own civil governor,¹ the Arabian prince Aretas (Haritha), who then held the city, might naturally be disposed to let an influential section of the population deal as they pleased with their refractory members."² Commissioned by the authorities of his nation, assured of the help of the synagogues when he should have arrived at Damascus, and believing that he should have the connivance, if not the consent, of the civil power, Saul set forth on the way to Damascus. There is no sign of hesitation on his part. He hastened with the determination to root out this heresy. But the issue was to be far otherwise than he deemed. He had reckoned on many things when he set out. He did not reckon on the action to be taken by the risen Lord. But this action was to be decisive for Saul, and soon Saul will be led in triumph by Jesus of Nazareth.

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 32.

² Dr. Hatch, "Encyclopædia Britannica," Art. "Paul."

CHAPTER II.

CONVERSION.

St. Paul's statement regarding his conversion : In Galatians—In Philippians—In First Corinthians—Incidental character of these references—The three accounts in the Acts of the Apostles—After his conversion—In Damascus—Ananias—Reality of his conversion—Its importance—Attempts to explain it away—The failure of these attempts—St. Paul's witness to the resurrection.

PAUL does not tell, in any of his epistles, the story of his conversion. In more places than one he refers to it in terms which leave us in no doubt as to its greatness, its completeness, and its suddenness. We shall, in the first place, look at these references, and then take up the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles. The first of these is in the Epistle to the Galatians. "It was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles."¹ But his main purpose here is not to tell how he became a Christian, but to say how he was made an apostle. His opponents had said that he was not an apostle, that he had no right and no standing beside the original apostles. He therefore had to vindicate his claim to apostleship, and he emphatically places in the forefront that he was an apostle, "not from men, neither through men, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead."² Nor was the gospel he preached received from men—"Neither did

¹ Gal. i. 15, 16.

² Ibid. i. 1.

I receive it from men, nor was I taught it ; but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ.”¹ As his gospel was, so also were his position and calling as an apostle through revelation of Jesus Christ. It is in this connection that he refers to the way and manner in which he became a Christian. He gives no hint of any doubts and perplexities of mind, which, being met and overcome, led him to be a follower of Christ. He passes at once in his rapid narrative from the time when he was a persecutor to the time when he preached the gospel he once hated. But here as elsewhere we find the article of faith, which to Paul was the foundation on which all other articles of faith were built up. In the verse already cited he emphatically says of the Father, “who raised him from the dead.” It was the appearance to him of the Risen Lord, which made him a Christian, gave him a gospel to preach, and sent him forth as the apostle of the Gentiles. This incidental reference gives us at once the fact of his conversion and the cause of it.

Another reference we find in the Epistle to the Philippians. But this also is occasional and incidental. He is again in controversy. His opponents here gloried in the fact that they were Jews, and he makes reply, “If any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more ; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; as touching zeal, persecuting the church, as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. Howbeit, what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ.”² His aim is to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. Both here and in the Epistle to the Galatians, he lays stress on the suddenness of the change in him. He had been seeking the righteousness of the law. He was led suddenly to seek the righteousness which is in Christ. He is now ready to suffer the loss of all things that he may gain Christ. Here again he passes rapidly from the state in which he was a persecutor, to the state in which he was a Christian, and again the cause is the appearance to him of the Risen One.

We may note a third reference to his conversion. In the eleventh chapter of 1 Corinthians he says, “Last of all as

¹ Gal. i. 12.

² Phil. iii. 5-7.

unto one born out of due time he appeared to me also ; for I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”¹ It is not of set purpose that he makes the reference. His aim is to prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He therefore enumerates the appearances of the Risen Lord, and the people to whom He appeared. He himself is the last to whom Christ appeared. He lays stress on this fact, as of great significance at least to himself. For the others it might have been expected that the Lord would have manifested Himself to them ; His appearance only confirmed the faith in Christ they had already professed. For St. Paul it was a new beginning of life. It seemed almost unnatural that a persecutor should have been called to be an apostle. This reference, as well as the former ones, fastens our thoughts on the singular character of the event. It is to be noted again that all the references are consistent, emphatic, and uniform in the testimony they bear. St. Paul believed that he had seen the Lord. He puts the appearance to himself on a level with the appearances to the apostles after the resurrection. The word used must have the same meaning in this and in the former verses. St. Paul intends to give a proof of the resurrection of Christ, and the proof would fail if he did not mean that Christ in true humanity was seen by Paul.² Paul believed that he had seen Jesus Christ. He puts it himself as beyond doubt. “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”³ he asks the Corinthians in impassioned language.

We have purposely gone to Paul’s acknowledged writings in order to establish the fact of his conversion, and the importance he attached to it. That he refers to it so frequently, and in such terms, shows how decisive a fact it was. No doubt, details are wanting, but the absence of details is accounted for by the fact that he mentions it only incidentally when he is occupied with some other topic. There is nothing in these references inconsistent with the detailed accounts given us in the Acts of the Apostles. We have the facts stated in the Acts no fewer than three times.⁴ It is first stated by the historian himself

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 8, 9.

² Here we may refer to the masterly commentary of Principal Edwards on First Corinthians. The commentary on the fifteenth chapter is the ablest and the most satisfactory known to us.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 1.

⁴ Acts ix. 3-10 ; xxii. 6-21 ; xxvi. 12-18.

in the course of his continuous narrative. It is given a second time by Paul himself in the address on the Temple stairs, and a third time, again by Paul, in the speech to King Agrippa. A minute examination reveals minute differences, but a comparison of them shows that they agree in the essential facts. Baur, in his *Life of Paul*, and others after him, have magnified these differences, and made them out to be contradictions, but the general verdict of criticism may be stated in the words of Dr. Hatch: "The difference does not constitute a valid argument against the general truth of the narrative."¹ We shall not therefore enter into any detailed account of the difficulties and differences in these narratives, but, assuming their general agreement, give a short narrative of the details of his conversion.

Paul having persecuted the Church in Jerusalem till he found his occupation gone, set forth to pursue the same fearful task in Damascus. He pushed on with the utmost speed. He did not intermit his journey even for an hour or two till the heat of the noonday sun had abated a little. For the great event took place at mid-day.² Suddenly he saw "a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them that journeyed with me." All accounts agree that a light shone, and a voice was heard, and also as to the words which were spoken: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Who art thou, Lord? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; but rise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Such is the record of the short and vivid dialogue between the Risen Lord and him who had persecuted the Church. No comment is needed to bring out the meaning of it. Question and answer come with abrupt suddenness. They bear the stamp of naturalness, and are appropriate to the circumstances. They bring home to Paul the persuasion that he has to do with One who has the right to command his allegiance, and to dispose of his life, and he yielded himself loyally to the claim of Christ.

Meanwhile he is stricken with blindness and helplessness. He is no longer the ruling spirit of the party, who had urged them on during their wearisome journey and kept their strength and courage up. He is now weaker than the weakest, more feeble than the most feeble of the band. He is a weary, helpless traveller, who must depend on others. Though nigh unto the

¹ "Encyclopædia Britannica," vol. xviii. p. 416.

² Acts xxvi. 12

city he is still some distance from it, and, however short it was, the remaining space must have appeared unusually great to his waning strength. The company must hasten on, as the city gates would close at sunset. From midday to sunset in any season of the year gives a few hours, but even a few miles take many hours when a blind and bewildered man must be led by the hand. Slowly and painfully they made their way over the rough path until they passed through the city gates and entered the city. How painful to Paul was this short journey, and how must the horror of the sharp outline of it have been stamped on his memory! The purpose and plan of his life had been shattered at a blow. His pride as a Jew, and his self-confidence had vanished, and in a spiritual trouble which cast his bodily pain and weakness utterly into the shade, he made his way through the streets of Damascus, until he reached the street which is called Straight, and found his way to the house of Judas.

Paul had been led by the hand as one who was blind and helpless. Through the busy streets he had passed, but he was conscious only of his own sad thoughts. No doubt he was so far relieved to reach the house of Judas. It was a relief to him to be free from the necessity of movement. To remain in bodily quiescence and strive to think out the meaning of what had happened to him, was something to be thankful for. What welcome he would receive from Judas, and what relations Judas bore to Jews and Christians we do not know. Whether he was in sympathy with the purpose that had led Paul to Damascus we cannot be sure, but most likely he was. To him the arrival of his expected guest, in his helpless state, must have been a painful surprise. No doubt, his hospitality would expand to meet the claim made upon it. But the hospitality that Paul chiefly needed was a place where he might lie in motionless silence. "He was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink."¹ Scripture gives us only this negative statement regarding him. Without sight, unable to eat or drink, unable also to bear the companionship of his friends, he is left alone. One note indeed is given us, and that a most characteristic one: "Behold he prayeth."² Out of the depths he cried unto God. That relief of the wretched, that unfailing resource of the unhappy was open to him, and he prayed, as he had never prayed

¹ Acts ix. 9.

² Ibid. ix. 12.

before. While he prayed, his intolerable misery was somewhat relieved. Not yet in reality, only in a vision, did he see the hope of deliverance. "He hath seen a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands upon him, that he might receive his sight."¹ We may not dwell on the agony of these three days, nor seek to depict the horrors through which he passed. Very terrible, and never to be forgotten, it must have been. But the trouble was soon to end. He that had smitten was soon to bind up his wounds. But the healing was to be done not by the Lord Himself, but by means of one of His servants.

To Ananias the will of the Lord was made known. He is to go to the house of Judas, to the street called Straight, and inquire for Saul of Tarsus. Now Ananias had already heard of Saul of Tarsus, and what he had heard made him by no means willing to go. He had heard what and how much evil Saul had done to the saints at Jerusalem, and he knew that Saul had authority from the chief priests to bind all that called on Christ's name. He was not prepared to undertake the task. But his reluctance was overcome, and he gladly went to Saul. The Lord said to Ananias, "Go thy way : for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel : For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake."² So Ananias went to the house of Judas, found Saul, "and laying his hands upon him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight ; and he arose and was baptized ; and he took food and was strengthened." Thus shortly and simply is the wonderful story told. The essential matters are given, and all else withheld. We hear nothing of those companions who were with him when the light from heaven shone, nothing of his host, nor of how long he stayed in his house after the visit of Ananias, nor of any talk between Ananias and Saul, after the one brief message of power he was sent to deliver. No doubt he did not stay long with Judas, for the narrative goes on to say, "And he was certain days with the disciples who were at Damascus."

¹ Acts ix. 12.

² Ibid. ix. 15.

We have purposely put first the allusions which Paul makes to his conversion in his epistles, and then the incidents recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, to show that the latter are in entire harmony with the former. They but fill up the outline which Paul himself draws. Both agree in the fact that the persecutor suddenly became a believer, and that he never through the years of his life ceased to be a believer in Christ the Lord, and never ceased to testify to others that he had seen the Lord. There is scarcely any other fact in the history of the Early Church that has called forth so much controversy as the fact of the conversion of Paul, and scarcely any that has called forth an equal amount of hostile criticism. It is, however, beyond the power of any hostility to explain away or deny the fact of this conversion, and the permanent results that flowed from it. I do not propose to examine the theories which have been set forth to account for the conversion of Paul, without holding that there was an appearance to him of the Risen Lord. It is admitted on all hands that Paul believed that he had seen the Lord. But then we have many explanations of the possible ways by which Paul might have mistaken an inward impression for an objective fact. Some of these explanations are among the curiosities of literature.

Let us take for example the account given us by Renan.¹ He first describes the journey taken by Paul, and we have the usual psychological description of Paul's inward trouble, which, as we have touched on it already, we may dismiss here. Paul is overwhelmed both with the fatigue of his journey and with his preoccupation of mind. He has inflamed eyes, probably the beginning of ophthalmia; "all the debilitating effects of the days just past accumulate, the nerves relax their power and a reaction sets in. Perhaps, also, the sudden passage from the sun-smitten plain to the cool shades of the gardens enhanced his suffering condition, and seriously excited the fanatical traveller. Dangerous fevers, accompanied by delirium, are quite sudden in these latitudes, and in a few minutes the victim is prostrated as by a thunderstroke." Thus we have ophthalmia, we have fever, we have a little further on a thunderstorm, and as is well known the "thunder was the voice of God, the lightning was the fire of God;" surely all these are sufficient to produce a "cerebral commotion." In the "cerebral commotion" Paul

¹ Renan, "The Apostles," English Translation, p. 97.

fancied he saw the vision recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. We naturally ask, Why were the results of this passing cerebral commotion permanent? M. Renan is prompt with his answer. "Impetuous natures pass instantaneously from one extreme to the other. For them there exist solemn moments which change the course of a lifetime, which colder natures never experience." When once they receive such a solemn experience, it would seem that they carefully preserve the memory of it, and never have another. Paul's attachment to the Christian cause was only "a new phase of fanaticism."

Then we are reminded that Paul was generally a poor sort of creature. To have visions was no uncommon thing with him. Besides, his constitution was sickly, and he makes constant allusions to his bodily weaknesses. He is troubled with a thorn in the flesh. Surely, M. Renan thinks, this is a fit man for hallucinations, and he accordingly sets down the occurrence on the way to Damascus as an hallucination. The statement of Renan is hardly one that can be taken seriously. That a sickly, nervous, broken-down man should have been able to do the work which Paul accomplished for so many years, may well be set down as an hallucination; that he should have been able to sustain the immense bodily fatigue and anxiety of his many journeys; that he should have strength to carry on hard, manual work, and at the same time engage in a work which cost the most severe mental strain; that he should have on him also the burdens and perplexities of all the churches—to bear all these as Paul bore them indicates physical strength and vigour in no common degree. Any explanation of the occurrence on the way to Damascus, which postulates weak nerves and a sickly constitution on the part of Paul, may be laughed out of court. As for the vigour of his understanding, the strength of his intelligence, the tenderness of his conscience, the keenness of his insight into human nature, and the majesty of his moral purity, have we not the evidence of these epistles written by his pen, which have extorted the wonder and admiration of Christendom for many generations? We may not occupy more space with such a theory or such an explanation.

But there are other explanations of a more refined order. We take two of the latest of these and submit them to a brief criticism. We choose these because they are more recent, and because they are by men of the highest culture and widest repu-

tation. The first is set forth by Professor Otto Pfleiderer. It first appeared in his work on Paulinism. In essential agreement with what there appeared, he reproduces it in his Hibbert Lecture, and finally it appears in his elaborate work, "Das Urchristenthum, seine Schriften und Lehren in Geschichtlichem Zusammenhang," published at Berlin in 1887. We shall take the passages from the Hibbert Lecture.¹ "It is beyond doubt that Paul was fully convinced of the objective reality of the appearance of Christ with which he was favoured; at the same time, however, he seems elsewhere to intimate that it was not an ordinary seeing and hearing with the physical senses, but an inward experience within his soul. For he says, with evident reference to his conversion, Gal. i. 16, 'It pleased God to reveal His son *in me*, that I might preach Him among the heathen;' and 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'God shined *in our hearts*, for the illumination of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' But in that case we shall be justified in placing the event in the same category with these other 'visions and revelations' of which Paul elsewhere often speaks²—that is, it is allowable to place that decisive experience, notwithstanding its extraordinary character, in the category of visions, which are at all events to a certain degree to be explained from the mental condition of the subject." Then follows a psychological study of the mind of Paul while he was a persecutor. Pfleiderer assumes that "Paul had felt a goad in his soul against which he vainly sought to kick." Might not the believers in Jesus be right after all? Might not the suffering Messiah be the true Messiah? "Was not, perhaps, precisely the undeserved suffering of such a righteous servant of God as Jesus must have been, according to the delineations of His disciples, intended to be the Divinely-ordered means of rendering sinners righteous before God?" Thoughts of this kind grew upon him, till he began almost to believe that "Jesus had been in reality exalted by God to be the celestial Messiah." Then, "the image of the crucified Jesus, as Stephen had seen it at his death, presented itself with increasing distinctness prominently before Paul's inward vision." After some further remarks of the same kind Pfleiderer is in a position to say, "It appears to me that we are in a position to perceive fully the mental condition and circumstances from

¹ Hibbert Lecture, pp. 33, 34.

² 2 Cor. xii. 1; Gal. ii. 2; Comp. Acts xvi. 9, xxvii. 23.

which the *vision* of Paul can be psychologically explained. An excitable, nervous temperament ; a soul that had been violently agitated and torn by the most terrible doubts ; a most vivid phantasy, occupied with the awful scenes of persecution on the one hand, and on the other by the ideal image of the celestial Christ ; in addition, the nearness of Damascus with the urgency of a decision, the lonely stillness, the scorching and blinding heat of the desert—in fact everything combined to produce one of those ecstatic states in which the soul believes that it sees those images and conceptions which profoundly agitate it, as if they were phenomena proceeding from the outward world. However, whether we are satisfied with this psychologically explained vision, or prefer to regard an objective Christophany in addition necessary to explain the conversion of Paul, it remains in either case certain that it was God who in the soul of Paul caused a light to shine to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”¹

We have given Pfleiderer's view at some length, as it is as plausible a presentation of the vision theory as any with which we are acquainted. He has had the advantage also of having known the way in which Baur and others had set forth the vision theory, and has added to their presentation features which serve to give completeness to it. The concluding sentence of the passage last quoted serves also to make the reader suppose that it is of little consequence, either to faith or to theology, whether there was an objective Christophany or not. The consequences are, however, serious. How shall we trust the apostle in all his other statements if in this decisive and crucial instance he was unable to distinguish between a subjective impression and an objective fact? Pfleiderer concedes that it is beyond doubt that Paul was fully convinced of the objective reality of the appearance of Christ. But if there were no objective appearance, what then? We have, however, a right to trust the apostle, at all events until it is conclusively shown that he was mistaken.

For the psychological imaginings of Pfleiderer and others there is really no shred of evidence in the epistles of Paul, nor in the Acts of the Apostles. The only relevant fact adduced by Pfleiderer is that Paul had “visions and revelations,” and he thinks himself justified in placing the event on the road to

¹ Hibbert Lecture, pp. 43, 44.

Damascus in the same category. His references are to Gal ii. 2, 2 Cor. xii. 1 *sq.* When we turn to these passages we find that the first is, "I went up by revelation." Now, unless Pfeiderer means to identify revelation and vision, the reference is irrelevant and misleading. But Paul does not here say by what means the revelation was made to him. As to the other passage, it runs as follows—"I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." He is reluctant to speak of them. When these visions and revelations came to him, consciousness almost ceased; whether he was in the body or out of the body he could not tell; what he heard was unspeakable, not lawful for a man to utter.¹ He can speak of what he had seen at his conversion. Indeed he often speaks of it, and frequently claims that he had seen the Lord. From the statement in the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians we gather that he was in the habit of setting forth the facts and the evidence for believing in the resurrection of Christ. "I delivered unto you," he says. There is no reason to think that he did this only at Corinth; rather he did it everywhere. But it is plain that he never did refer to these extraordinary ecstatic visions in the course of his preaching.² He therefore does not himself place them in the same category. Nor would any one else be inclined to do so, were it not in the interests of a theory.

It is to be remarked, also, that all the psychological explanations assume that it was Paul's belief in Christ which produced the vision. If it could be shown that before the event on the way to Damascus Paul did believe in Christ, this would have some plausibility. Settled intense belief may give rise to visions, but here it is the vision which gave rise to the belief. All these far-fetched and ingenious speculations arise from the desire to explain away Paul's vision as something which bears evidence to Christ's resurrection. If we may suppose that Christ Jesus could really, and really did, manifest Himself in true humanity to Paul, how simple, easy, and natural the story becomes. If this be granted, we have a sufficient cause for the momentous

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 4.

² We refer the reader to an able argument in the *Expositor*, for October, 1889, by Professor John Massie, on the conversion of Paul. Though he does not refer to Pfeiderer, he completely disposes of his view, and gives many reasons why we should not place this event in the category of visions.

change in the belief of Paul. We can account for the permanent results which flowed from that change, and for everything connected with it. If it be denied, we may labour at psychological explanations as much as we please, but we shall never be able to give them an air of reality. The only result of Pfeiderer's psychological explanation is, that one is provoked to write a similar psychological account of Pfeiderer's state of mind, and how he came to propound such a theory.

The second view we refer to is set forth in the work, "The Kernel and the Husk." The author has a very subtle theory of the matter. "I myself firmly believe that there was a spiritual act of Jesus simultaneous with the conveyance of the manifestation to the brain of the apostle. But none the less, however coincident it may have been with a spiritual reality, if there was no presence of a material body, the manifestation of Jesus to St. Paul must be placed in the class of visions; and if it was not seen by others who had the same physical means of seeing, it must be called in some sense subjective."¹ It is evident that the author does not believe that there was any presence of a material body. But it is equally evident that Paul did believe in such a presence. It was a body transformed, made spiritual and glorious, but still a body which Jesus wore, a body which had such affinity with the body He wore on earth that it could be truly called one with it.

We get a clue to the state of mind of the author of "The Kernel and the Husk" from the following passage. "To my mind the manifestation of the Resurrection of Christ appears, not as an isolated fact, but as a part, and the central part, of the great revelation of the immortality of the soul which has been conveyed by God to man, in accordance with the laws of human nature from the beginning of the creation of the world by the medium of imaginative faith."² Now this passage, taken along with some others of the same tendency, seems to us to afford some guidance to the reason of the intense hatred which the author has to the idea of a bodily resurrection of our Lord. He feels, with Plato, that the body is a prison and a tomb. An accomplished classical scholar, he has so thoroughly imbibed the spirit and tendency of Greek philosophy that he does not seem to have apprehended that the problem of immortality has another side than that presented by Greece. We

¹ P. 230.

² Pp. 231-2.

know from history how unwelcome to the Greek intelligence was the doctrine of the Resurrection. The Greek, in the same fashion as our author, was occupied with the problem of the immortality of the soul, and for them who could believe in immortality, death was looked on as release from the prison-house of the body.

But a line of thought radically different is presented in the Old Testament and in the New. There is in the Old Testament a striking absence of reference to the immortality of the soul. In fact the Old Testament does not seem to contemplate the existence of a spirit or soul apart from the body. The whole organic man is in fellowship with God, and somehow, the way being yet not made plain, the organic man will continue to be in fellowship with God. God is the living God, and the God of the living, and those who love Him will somehow continue to live.

In the New Testament we have no solution of the problem of the immortality of the soul. Nor do we find it in the teaching of Paul. But "he teaches a nobler doctrine—that an endless life awaits man after death, a life in which body and soul will at the last partake." "St. Paul's central doctrine was the union of men through faith with the living Christ, who is the quickening Spirit. In virtue of this union body and soul remain, though locally separated through death, in personal union with one another; and as the life-giving omnipotence of Christ raises the life of the soul into the higher life of the spirit, so it changes the body through a resurrection from psychological to spiritual. Thus the doctrine of the Incarnation gives a new and startling significance to our bodily existence and the entire course of nature, while it floods with light the darkness of death."¹

We suspect that the difficulties which are raised about the objective appearance of Christ to Paul are largely due to the influence of Greek culture, and to the problem of the immortality of the soul as that problem was stated by Greek philosophy. It is not so much an objection to the supernatural, and the possibility of its manifestation, that meets us here. It is rather a rooted aversion to brute matter, and a hatred to the idea of a "bodily" resurrection. But this arises largely from the fact that they are unable—so strong is the prejudice derived

¹ Principal Edwards on 1 Cor., p. 387.

from Greek influences—to apprehend the Pauline view of the body, and the Pauline conception of the future life. We, however, need have no hesitation in saying that Christ rose from the dead in a human body ; that Christ is now living in a human body ; and that Christ, in a human body, manifested Himself to Paul, and, in His own kingly way changed the persecutor of His Church into His servant and apostle.

CHAPTER III.

IN ARABIA, DAMASCUS, JERUSALEM, AND ANTIOCH.

Journey to Arabia—Its significance—Return to Damascus—Attempt to preach at Damascus—Opposition to him—His danger and escape—Visit to Jerusalem—Suspicion of the Church—Intervention of Barnabas—Attempt to work at Jerusalem—Reluctance to leave it—Return to Tarsus—Life and work at Tarsus and in Cilicia—The Church at Antioch, its origin, history, and influence—Barnabas—Work at Antioch—Christians—The controversy with the Judaisers.

FOR a clear account of his work after his conversion we turn to his own biographical statement. "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood : neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me : but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus."¹ With this statement the account in the Acts of the Apostles does not seem to agree. Luke says nothing of the journey to Arabia. He speaks as if Paul at once began to preach in the synagogues of Damascus. "He was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God."² The apparent discrepancy need not disturb us. Very likely Luke had never heard of the Arabian journey. His acquaintance with the apostle began at a much later date. Besides, Luke does not profess to give, and certainly does not give us a detailed biography of the apostle. In a few brief sentences he often gives us an account of years of work and labour. Even if he had known of the journey to Arabia, he may have not mentioned it, as it was not connected

¹ Gal. i. 16, 17.

² Acts ix. 19, 20.

directly with Paul's apostolic work. And as a matter of fact, whatever Luke does tell us in the Acts of the Apostles, has a direct connection with Paul's missionary work. There is nothing, then, to be inferred from the silence of Luke on this occasion.

"A veil of thick darkness hangs over St. Paul's visit to Arabia. Of the scenes among which he moved, of the thoughts and occupations which engaged him while there, of all the circumstances of a crisis which must have shaped the whole tenor of his after-life, absolutely nothing is known."¹ We do not even know what is the place to which he went; whether to the Haurân, or to the peninsula of Sinai. Certainly one would like to imagine that he had gone to the Mount so famous in the ancient history of his people. To suppose that he had actually seen Mount Sinai, and on the scene of the grandest event of the old dispensation had realized the greater grandeur of the new, gives vividness and graphic power to the contrast which he draws as follows: "Which things contain an allegory: for these women are two covenants; the one from Mount Sinai in Arabia, bearing children unto bondage, which is Hagar: for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to the Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children."² Whether he actually visited the scene of the lawgiving or not we can hardly say; but it is certain that he must have felt the need of solitude. He must think the matter out, and know where he stood. His old theory of life had been shattered; the grounds of his confidence were destroyed; and what he had regarded as attainments, advantages, and permanent possessions, had become valueless. He had also to think out the consequences of his new position. He had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. What was to be the result of this belief, and what its bearing on all the other beliefs in which he had lived? May we not suppose that here he read over again the Old Testament Scriptures, and read them in the fresh light he had obtained? He, like a Jew, had read the ancient Scriptures with a veil over his heart; now he makes an opportunity to read them again with open mind and receptive heart, and he finds that Jesus Christ is the kind of Messiah he ought to have expected. In this solitude he won his way to the command of those great principles of interpretation, and those true principles of action on

¹ Lightfoot, "Gal.," p. 87.

² Gal. iv. 24, 25.

which his future life was based, and by which he was guided. When he returned to Damascus he was thoroughly equipped for his work ; and after his term of meditative solitude he comes forth, the only man of his time who had thoroughly grasped, and was prepared to carry out, the purpose of his Crucified and Risen Lord. The other disciples learned but slowly what their Lord would have them to do. Paul seems to have learned from the first that the mission of the Gospel was wide as the world, and he was the chosen instrument for that great purpose. By a great moral, spiritual, and physical effort he himself had entered into the kingdom of God ; during a period of solitude and of utter calm he learned the meaning of the Gospel for himself and others, and he came forth to enter on the stormy career of active missionary life.

He returned to Damascus. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision : but declared to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judæa, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance."¹ Thus first in Damascus he began to preach Christ. From the first, too, began "the perils from his own countrymen," which were to continue all his life. "He preached Christ in the synagogues." The meetings and services of the synagogue afforded him a fit opportunity. For the services were frequent, held three times a week as well as on the Sabbath day, and in Damascus there must have been a great number of them. To the amazement of the people he preached "Jesus, that He is the Son of God."² He may have been invited to speak, as visitors often were, for he was known at Damascus. His reputation as a rising rabbi had reached them. They knew also of the reason of his visit to Damascus. "Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havock of them which called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests."³ They did not inquire into the truth of his message ; they inquired into the character and consistency of the preacher. That he should preach Jesus filled them with astonishment. His preaching had no effect here. He spake boldly indeed, "and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ."⁴ But we are not told that any were persuaded ; we do not hear

¹ Acts xxvi. 19, 20.

² Ibid, ix. 21.

³ Ibid. ix. 21.

⁴ Ibid. ix. 22.

of any church at Damascus, or of any converts to Christ in that city. We read instead that their amazement and confusion of mind grew into rage, and the Jews took counsel to kill him. Paul came to know of their plot, and he, never careless of his life, though always ready to risk it and lay it down if need were, resolved to flee.

His enemies were well organized. He might, indeed, have appealed to the chiefs of the organized Jewish community; but perhaps they were in the plot, and no help could be expected from them on behalf of him, who was in their eyes a renegade, and who had the hardihood to confront, argue with, and put to confusion the wisest and most learned of their rabbis. Nor was any help to be expected from Aretas or his representative. In truth, a passing allusion in one of his epistles shows us that the danger was more imminent than is indicated in Luke's account. "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king guarded the city of the Damascenes in order to take me; and through a window was I let down in a basket by the wall, and escaped his hands."¹ It was no private plot, hatched by irresponsible people, that Paul had to fear. The governor was privy to it—indeed, had taken the guidance of it into his own hands, and had set his underlings to guard the walls lest Paul should escape. While the soldiers were on guard at the gates, and the angry Jews were on the watch for him, Paul was taken to a house, the wall of which may have formed part of the fortification of the town. A window afforded a means of escape. A rope and basket had been provided; Paul stepped into the basket, was lowered to the ground, and left the city never to return. Thus ended his first attempt. In this humiliating fashion he had to leave the scene of his first ministry. Damascus had become to him a place of strange memories, which no doubt frequently afforded him occasion of much reflection. Whenever the name came back to him, or was mentioned in his presence, it must have brought to him the recollection of those days of agony during which he was without sight, and did neither eat nor drink. And it must have been associated also with the painful sense of failure. He had preached, and had laboured, without result. He had to flee for his life, and yet this was part of his work, and thus he was prepared to suffer shame and reproach for the name of Jesus.

From Damascus to Jerusalem is his next step. We have no

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33.

account of his journey, nor of the duration of time that elapsed between his leaving Damascus and reaching Jerusalem. Luke gives no date. He says, "And when he was come to Jerusalem."¹ Paul himself says, "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days."² It is uncertain whether we are to reckon these three years from his conversion, or from his return to Damascus. Paul's language is definite, and the language of Luke is undefined with regard to time. We must remember, however, the purpose of Paul when he was writing the Epistle to the Galatians, and particularly when he wrote those interesting parts of it which bear on his own life. He is arguing the question of his relation to the original Apostles. He recounts his life and his visits to Jerusalem in order to show that he was not indebted to them. He rigidly excludes from his narrative everything that has no bearing on that point, and what he states he states with precision. It would be nothing to the purpose to tell of the suspicion with which the disciples regarded him, or of the intervention of Barnabas, or of the fact that Barnabas "brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus."³ These incidents, picturesque as they are, were not relevant to the purpose of Paul, and he has a habit of going straight to the mark.

But what, we may be asked, about the further statement of Paul? He says, "I was still unknown by face unto the churches of Judæa which were in Christ."⁴ But Luke says, "He was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord; and he spake and disputed against the Grecian Jews (margin, Hellenists); but they went about to kill him."⁵ Surely these are contradictory statements! We quote from Bishop Lightfoot in answer: "Yet on examining the narratives more closely, this discrepancy is reduced to very narrow limits. St. Luke confines his sojourn especially to Jerusalem, and his preaching to a small section of unbelievers, not the genuine Jews, but the Hellenists. He relates, moreover, that Paul's visit terminated abruptly, owing to a plot against his life, and that he was hurried off to Cæsarea, whence he forthwith embarked. To a majority, therefore, of the Christians he *might*,

¹ Acts ix. 26.² Gal. i. 18.³ Acts ix. 27.⁴ Gal. i. 22.⁵ Acts ix. 28, 29.

and to the churches of Judæa he *must*, have been personally unknown. But though the two accounts are not contradictory, the impression left by St. Luke's narrative needs correcting by the more precise and authentic statement of St. Paul."¹

He is back again at Tarsus, the city of his birth, and of his work in it there remains no record. He has essayed to work in two cities, and he has not been permitted. He has been finally and emphatically rejected both at Damascus and at Jerusalem, and the rejection must have preyed on his mind. The thought must have often occurred to him, Shall I ever find an opportunity of preaching the gospel? The opposition to him was bitter even unto death, and he may well have begun to despair. During the visit to Jerusalem which came to so abrupt an end, he had visited the Temple, and was engaged in earnest prayer. He was praying, no doubt, that he might find a way of access to the hearts of his countrymen; and while he prayed he fell into a trance, and he seemed to hear the voice of the Lord telling him that the city would not hear him, and commanding him forthwith to depart. "Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; because they will not receive of thee testimony regarding Me."² Paul is evidently reluctant to leave Jerusalem, and is desirous of trying to reach the hearts of his own people. He even makes excuses for them. It was really not unnatural on the part of his people to refuse a hearing to a man whom they had known only as a cruel persecutor of the Church. "And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: and when the blood of Stephen Thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him." May he not still seek to reach them? And then he is peremptorily told that for him there is no work in Jerusalem. "Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." His rejection by the Jews at Jerusalem was final and decisive. The question is decided for him. He has to flee to Tarsus. But not even yet is there found for him any place of work. He has to wait the Master's appointed time, and to wait at Tarsus.

Of his life from the time when he fled from Jerusalem to Tarsus,³ until Barnabas went forth to Tarsus⁴ to seek him, we know

¹ "Gal.," p. 92.

³ Ibid. ix. 30.

² Acts xxii. 18.

⁴ Ibid. xi. 25.

little. Luke is silent regarding this period. St. Paul does indeed say, "I came unto the regions of Syria and Ciliciā."¹ And again it is said of him, "And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."² It is likely, therefore, that he had preached the gospel in Cilicia, and at no subsequent period had he the opportunity of doing work there. As he went to Syria and Cilicia to confirm the churches already founded, it is likely he had already founded them during this period of which we have no written record. Tarsus would be his head-quarters, and from it as a centre he may have gone single-handed into the country round about, and laboured as an evangelist. At Tarsus he was among friends who had known him in his boyhood. There he could also work at his trade, support himself by the labour of his hands, and earn for himself what would enable him to live, and to give some time to the great work of his life. This unrecorded time may have been fruitful also in other ways. He was learning the business of his life. He was trying to find out the best way of preaching the gospel, and the most acceptable way of presenting Christ and Him crucified to the heart and conscience of the people. He may have made many failures, he may have been conscious of many mistakes. But he was the kind of man who was not to be discouraged by failure, but who was able to overcome his mistakes and to profit by them. He acquired here the great skill with which he was wont to cope with the conceit and obduracy of the Jews; each conflict found him more ready and more able to deal with any new difficulty; his knowledge of men increased, and that marvellous tact which enabled him to be all things to all men grew by use into a fine, sympathetic insight into human character and tendency. It was the time when those marvellous powers were trained and disciplined which were afterwards to be displayed on a far wider field.

It was a time, also, when he obtained a fuller comprehension of the vast inheritance of Christian truth contained in the revelation of Christ. For his was ever a growing mind. And unto the end, as we can gather from his epistles, his knowledge of "Him in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden,"³ increased as each new emergency arose, and each fresh difficulty presented itself. Paul was driven back anew to the truth and wisdom which are in Christ, and out of the fulness

¹ Gal. i. 21.² Acts xv. 41.³ Col. ii. 3.

of that source of guidance, he was able to draw what enabled him to triumph over every obstacle. As he found in Christ a continued source of strength and guidance : as by His grace he found he could do all things ; so his knowledge of Christ, of His person, of His work, and of His place in the universe and in the Church, increased from more to more, and became more and more definite. In this solitary and difficult sphere, cast on his own resources, and on the help of Christ alone, he acquired the qualifications needed for his apostolic work, both as a practical worker and as a teacher. Here, too, must have begun those rich and surprising experiences to which he refers at a later period. "How that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter."¹ Now, as in the after time, he may have been tossed from the heights of blessedness into the depths of sorrow, and have had to endure the torture and the anguish caused by "the thorn in the flesh."

Whatever the particulars of his work and of his experience may have been, we may be sure that this unwritten period of his life was fruitful in every way. We may safely say, that he who ventured to preach Christ to the angry Jews at Damascus, and to the Hellenists at Jerusalem, could not at Tarsus have kept silence. He felt all along the truth of what he wrote later : "Necessity is laid upon me : for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel."² He had got his commission to preach the gospel directly from the Lord Himself, and we cannot conceive him to have declined to exercise it.

While he was at work in Cilicia, and preparing for wider work, movements were going on in other places, which would soon call him forth to larger service. The call came to Paul in the simplest possible way. Luke traces it back to the time when Stephen was martyred, as if he would bring into one the results which sprang from that deed. In one sense the conversion of St. Paul, and his subsequent experience, may be traced to the death of Stephen. But other results had also flowed therefrom. "They, therefore, that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews."³ But the river of the water of life soon overflowed these artificial boundaries. By an irresistible impulse, to which they

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 4.² 1 Cor. ix. 16.³ Acts xi. 19.

could not but yield, men of Cyprus and Cyrene began to speak to the Greeks also. It is instructive to note that the barrier was overpassed by men of Cyprus and Cyrene. Naturally, to them the division between Jew and Gentile was not so marked nor so insurmountable as it was to the dwellers in Jerusalem. Perhaps not of set purpose, nor conscious of the wide significance of their deed, but impulsively, and because they must, they began the practice of speaking to others than Jews¹ of Jesus Christ.

Their movement obtained striking success, and met with emphatic approval. "The hand of the Lord was with them : and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord."² Before the news of this great movement reached the Church at Jerusalem, they had been prepared, in a striking manner, to receive the tidings without alarm or surprise. The same question had been before them in the case of Cornelius. He had been received by Peter into the Church, and had been baptized ; and on him and his house the gift of the Holy Ghost had been poured. There had been a discussion, and a debate, and Peter had been called to account. But those who heard Peter's account of the matter, "held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life."³ So the Church at Jerusalem, as soon as they heard the news, "sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch."⁴

No more fitting person could have been sent, nor one more able lovingly to encourage the movement. His former history ; his high character ; his eminent services ; and the esteem in which he was held all over the church, gave to him the influence which was needed. He came to Antioch, he saw the work ; he threw himself into it with right good will, and the work went on with ever-increasing energy and success. When he saw the crowds of heathen people who had gathered round the preachers, when he watched them as they listened to the Word, and beheld their walk and faith, he raised no question, made no difficulty : he saw simply the grace of God and was glad. He spoke to them ; but the report of that speech is simply,

¹ It is not quite clear whether we should read "Greeks" or "Grecian Jews" in Acts xi. 20. But it is clear that these men began the practice of preaching to those to whom the gospel was not preached before, and that is sufficient for our purpose.

² Acts xi. 21.

³ Ibid. xi. 18.

⁴ Ibid. xi. 22.

"He exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."¹ He did not counsel them that they should become Jews, nor command that they should be circumcised, or keep the customs, or observe the traditions of the elders ; all these were simply put aside, apparently not even mentioned, or considered. His exhortation was of another kind—that they should cleave unto the Lord. By the Lord he definitely meant the Lord Jesus. It was the first simple Christian creed, an acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord, and of themselves as His servants. Those who joined the new society, joined it on the footing that they belonged to Christ, that in heart and life they would cleave unto the Lord. Barnabas was satisfied that they ought to be members of the Church if they belonged to Christ, and did cleave steadfastly unto Him. Other questions he did not touch. It may be with reference to this singleness of view and simplicity of action that Luke adds the descriptive touch of character, "for he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith"—good, because he accepted with earnest gladness the work done by others, and with simplicity of heart accepted the new departure ; full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and thus able to know what was the work of the Lord, and to act on it without any thought of what further consequences might arise.†

The work, however, went on, and soon the need of more workers was seen. It had outgrown the strength of the present workers, and perhaps there were questions arising which needed the presence, not merely of a good man, but of a wise man as well, of one who could foresee, and lay down principles on which the Church might safely act. The occasion has come, and the man is ready. The hour is come and the man. Barnabas "went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul : and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch."² We should have liked to obtain one glimpse of Paul at Tarsus. Was he at his double work of tent-maker and evangelist ? Was there already a numerous band of converts in Tarsus and the neighbourhood, organized into churches, as was the practice a little later ? It is possible, even likely, but we do not know, and it is vain to conjecture.

It is even more trying to find that the story of a whole year's work of Barnabas and Paul is compressed by Luke into a single sentence. "And it came to pass that even for a whole year

¹ Acts xi. 23.

² Ibid. xi. 25, 26.

they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people.”³ What would we not give for the description of even one day’s work? We might then follow them throughout the day, share their toil during the hours of labour, go forth with them when the evening fell and the Sabbath began, listen to the words which fell from their lips, and follow them in the varied round of duty. But of this there is no record. Still we have one most significant sentence: “The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” Up to this time they had been spoken of by various names. They were the people of “the Way,” “the brethren,” “the disciples.” The Jews had called them “the Nazarenes.” In Antioch they had become sufficiently numerous to attract attention, to become the subject of common talk in the streets and houses, and thus to obtain a distinctive name. The great success and growing influence of Barnabas and Paul, along with the earnestness and zeal of those who believed in Jesus, had forced them into prominence, and they were called Christians. In Antioch there were Jews and Syrians, Greeks and Romans, and all the conditions necessary for the formation of a Gentile Christianity. As a matter of fact, in Antioch Gentile Christianity in a definite, organized form did really begin.

The form of the name also is significant. It is essentially Latin in its form. The people of Antioch took the word Christ—the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew Messiah—and added to it the termination which had been used to describe the followers of Marius and Pompey. They likely understood the word Christ to be a proper name, and the name Christian might not at first bear a religious significance. The populace used it roughly and without discrimination as a convenient name for the followers of Jesus Christ.

It is impossible to overrate the significance of the name and of the fact which it embodied. It meant that Christianity had passed beyond the bounds of Palestine, and also beyond the bounds of the Jewish race. It had a Gentile habitation and a Gentile name. It would appear, also, that at Antioch both Jew and Gentile had found “the common salvation” to be great enough to swallow up all the differences which had once separated them. To have a common interest in the common Lord, to have a common share in the common salvation, was

³ Acts xi, 26.

thought sufficient to justify them in living a common life. The question does not seem to have been even raised at Antioch. It did not occur to the Christians at Antioch that there was any difficulty. The difficulty arose when "certain came from James."¹ Before the arrival of these, Paul and Barnabas and their fellow-workers, lived together a common life, and were happy in their unconsciousness of any cause of disagreement. On the arrival of these members of the Church at Jerusalem, difficulties and disagreements at once arose. Who these were, or whether they had any official position, does not appear. It is doubtful whether they had any authority from James empowering them to act as they did. In the apostolic letter, which conveyed the decision of the Church at Jerusalem to the other Churches, and in the preparation of which James had taken a large share, the following expression occurs: "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment,"²—an expression which seems exactly to describe the position of these men, and to disavow their action. James, indeed, had great sympathy with those who strove to remain Jews, after they had become Christians. He strove in all ways to conciliate them. He would have nothing done to offend them. How far he was disposed to go may be seen from the following passage: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them which have believed; and they are all zealous for the law; and they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs."³ These words are likely the words of James. And the counsel he proceeds to give to Paul is also a proof of how anxious he was not to offend the Jewish Christians. It was one thing for him to be anxious not to offend them, it was another thing for him to join in an act of authority, which would make it impossible for Gentiles to become Christians without becoming Jews. He was anxious that Paul should disclaim the report that he had taught the dispersed Jews to forsake Moses. But he would go no further than this. We may safely infer that those who "came from James" acted on their own responsibility.

Their action had disastrous consequences. They split up the

¹ Gal. ii. 12.

² Acts xv. 24.

³ Ibid. xxi. 20, 21.

Church at Antioch into fragments. They caused the Jewish Christians to withdraw from the Gentile converts. They would not eat with them, nor live with them, nor associate with them in any way. They had whatsoever prestige their connection with Jerusalem could bring them. Their influence was very great. One consequence of their visit and their influence was to reveal a weak fibre in the character of very eminent men. Peter had come to Antioch and had thrown himself with his usual impulsive ardour into the work. He ate with the Gentiles, and recognised them as fellow-Christians. He had received Cornelius, and rejoiced that God had granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life. Why should he not eat with them? But when those, who came from James, interfered and laid down the law, Peter doubted, hesitated, and at length withdrew himself. "He drew back and separated himself." He had not thought out the matter, nor had he clearly discerned the principle on which his action should be based. Both in eating with the Gentiles and in withdrawing from them he had acted without reflection, apparently on impulse, and with the usual consequences of such action.

"Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation." He was a good man, but apparently not a man who could easily see the principles involved in a certain line of conduct, nor foresee the issues and the end to which it tended. So long as he could act in whole-hearted simplicity, and follow the dictates of his loving heart all went well with him. Let the simplicity of his consciousness be broken up, let opposing principles arise, which must lead to divergent lines of conduct, and such a man will fall into doubt, hesitation, pain; a good man will be anxiously afraid lest he offend other good men. He found that his conduct at Antioch was considered blameworthy by those who came from James, and he withdrew in order not to give them pain. Unthinkingly he had thrown himself into the movement; unthinkingly also he withdrew from it. Good men of his type are not uncommon in the history of the Church; men good, self-denying, lovable, but men who are not made of that stuff which enables them to meet and rule a crisis.

Happily for the future history of the Church, a man was on the ground who was made of sterner stuff; a man equally great in thought and in action; a man who could act on principle, and would not yield to impulse. Paul had his hand on

the helm. No doubt long before the scene described in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians had come to pass, Paul had been driven by stern necessity to think out the whole matter. It is likely, indeed, that he must have done so during the period of his sojourn at Tarsus. We may be sure, however, that as soon as he came to Antioch, and cast himself into the work, he would settle whether he was justified in receiving Gentiles into the Church. What were the conditions of entrance to be, and what profession the Gentiles were to make, were questions which Paul would not leave unsettled for any unnecessary length of time. Having once made up his mind, being persuaded that the will of Christ was not to burden the Gentile Churches with the weight of Mosaism, he would not change his view, nor yield either to authority or prejudice. Even if an Apostle, an Apostle who seemed to be a pillar, were to do anything to the contrary, Paul will withstand him to the face. "I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned"¹: so Paul says of that great controversy with Peter.

Thus he encouraged the Gentile Churches to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. He encouraged them in their refusal to become Jews. He would not enjoin them to keep the Jewish Sabbath, nor to make pilgrimages to the Jewish festivals. He would not constrain them to be circumcised themselves, nor to circumcise their children. Nor did he command them to observe the distinction between clean and unclean meats. How terrible a fall this would seem to a Jew of Jerusalem, whose life was still under the shadow of the Temple, and whose thinking was largely ruled by the old Jewish view of things. He was girded around with ceremonialism, and he had not yet seen how vast a difference it made to him to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Thus it almost became a principle of self-preservation on their part to insist on circumcision as an indispensable condition of salvation.

This Paul steadfastly resisted. He would have no man laid under the yoke of Pharisaism. He knew from sad experience how impossible it was for that type of religion to satisfy the deeper needs of man, or yield to him comfort and guidance. It would be unjust to the Gentile to lay a burden on him which even a Jew could not bear. It would be unfaithful to the truth of the gospel, would nullify its freedom and its power, to

¹ Gal. ii. 11.

make the observance of the law a necessary condition of its acceptance. It would be treachery to Christ, utterly disloyal to Him, "for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought."¹ So many were the principles involved in this great controversy, and so great were the principles at stake, that St. Paul set his face as a flint, reasoned, toiled, fought for freedom throughout the years, and still the conflict pursued him wheresoever he went. Though its fierceness abated somewhat as time went on, it never wholly died out. It remained for him a source of trouble and anxiety all his life. For which, in one way, we may be thankful; because the controversy led the Apostle to expound those principles of freedom, and to show forth those features of spiritual religion which are among the most precious heritages of the Church—a heritage, we may say, into which no section of the Church has ever yet fully entered.

For the sake of clearness we have stated generally the course of this controversy, and given in one view the result of events which happened during a series of years. We shall have to refer more than once to particular phases of the conflict.

¹ Gal. ii. 21.

CHAPTER IV.

SET APART FOR MISSION WORK.

In Antioch—Visit to Jerusalem—Barnabas and Saul set apart for mission work—Work in Cyprus—Conversion of the Proconsul—Elymas the Sorcerer—In Pamphylia—St. Paul's address in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia—Its results—They turn to the Gentiles—In Lycaonia—At Lystra—Stoning of St. Paul—Return to Antioch—End of first missionary journey.

WE return for a little to his work in Antioch. Barnabas and Paul were "gathered together with the church, and taught much people."¹ The practical effect of their teaching was soon shown in a marked manner. A report came to Antioch that a great famine prevailed at Jerusalem and throughout Palestine, and the Church resolved to send help to them. That such a famine should come was foreseen and had been foretold. We have here also the first mention of the appearance of "prophets" in the Christian Church. "In these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch." What was the character, and what were the functions of the prophet in the dispensation of the early Church, we gather from the statements of Paul in the great discussion contained in the First Epistle to the Corinthians.² Their main work was to bring home the truths of God to the hearts and consciences of men. They spoke with special Divine energy. Combined with this power of direct appeal was the power—which also belonged to the prophets of Israel—of direct prediction. It would lead us too far afield to

¹ Acts xi. 26.

² Chaps. xii. to xiv.

enter into a discussion of the prophetic office in the early Church, its nature, its function, and its temporary or permanent character. We find abundant traces of its presence and influence, but we may not dwell on them here.

In the instance before us we are told "that there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world ; which came to pass in the days of Claudius."¹ Luke tells us of the prediction and of its fulfilment. He does not tell us how long was the interval between the two. It may have been, as Ewald thinks, that the prophecy was made in the reign of Caligula,² and the fulfilment took place in the time of Claudius. The main thing is that the Church of Antioch believed the prophet, took action, and "every man according to his ability determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judæa ; which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul."³ The contributions of all the members of the Church were freely given, and every man gave according to his ability, and the amount was no doubt considerable. This was the first beginning of a practice which prevailed in the Churches planted by Paul, down to the time of the great Roman War. They recognised the duty of sending temporal assistance to the Church from whom they had received such signal spiritual benefits. Distress and poverty were almost chronic among the "poor saints" at Jerusalem. There were frequent famines in Palestine, and the Church there was afflicted and persecuted and in many ways distressed. It was fitting, therefore, that the Gentile Churches should come to the help of the mother Church. It was also a fitting outcome of the new life, and a sign of what the real nature of Christianity was. It became a bond of union between the Churches among the heathen and the Church at Jerusalem.

Barnabas and Saul were chosen to convey the gifts of the Church at Antioch to the mother Church. No doubt they were glad to revisit Jerusalem. Some years had passed since Paul had had to flee to Tarsus. Now on his return he needed no introduction. He was a recognised and accredited worker in the Church, and he was the representative of the Christian community of Antioch. He came also as the bearer of the gifts

¹ Acts xi. 28.

² "History of Israel," vol. vii. p. 334.

³ Acts xi. 29, 30.

of the Christian people. As to what took place during this visit to Jerusalem, whom he saw, and what he did, we know not. Nor does he seem to have made a long stay at Jerusalem. But there was one result of the visit which is noteworthy. "Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministration, taking with them John, whose surname was Mark."¹ Mark clung to them with great affection, and followed them with great zeal. His mother's house was a centre of great influence at Jerusalem. To it Peter went on his deliverance from prison,² and when he reached it found that many were gathered together and were praying. It is likely also that Mark was the young man mentioned in the Gospel,³ for Mark alone records that incident. We need not describe his career, nor dwell on his previous history. It is sufficient to note that his home was in the very centre of Christian work at Jerusalem, that he was well known to all the Apostles and to all the Church at Jerusalem and was much beloved.

It says much for Mark that he was willing to leave all this behind him, and go forth with Barnabas and Saul to the work to which they were called. It also says much for his mother that she was willing to let him go. He accompanied them on their return to Antioch, and was determined to share their labours, and help them, at least for a time.

The activity, intelligence, and Christian enterprise of the Church at Antioch were soon to be manifested in a form even more noble and more original. The notice is very brief, but sufficient to show how high the tide of Christian life had risen. At Antioch Christianity made a new departure, and Antioch became the mother Church of Gentile Christianity. "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."⁴ These names are full of interest, both on account of the men themselves, and because they cast light on the kind of people who made up the Church at Antioch. Apparently they are Jews, and Hellenists, and Greeks, and they live in unity and in brotherly love. Together they minister to the Lord, and together they fast. No doubt the vast problem of the heathen world had pressed on their minds and hearts, and

¹ Acts xii. 25.

² Ibid. xii. 12.

³ Mark xiv. 51, 52.

⁴ Acts xiii. 1.

the fast was appointed as the means of laying the matter before the Lord, and of finding what He would have them to do. As they served and prayed light came. "The Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Then when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."¹ What significance the laying-on of hands had for Paul we may not be able to determine. We may not infer from it that he ever looked on himself as one of a band of teachers chosen and ordained by the Church or appointed by the Apostles. His was a special mission. He was an Apostle "not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father."² He was "not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles."³ His commission was as real, and conveyed the same authority and privilege as theirs, and the truth he taught was the truth of God. He is not the delegate of the Church at Antioch. Nor does he look at this ordination as giving him his commission to preach the gospel. Yet it must have had for him a deep significance. If for no other reason than as a sign that the Church had recognised his call to the work of Christ, and as a promise that she would not forget him nor his work, but would ever remember him in her prayers.

Thus with the benediction and the prayers of the Church, Barnabas and Saul went forth on their first missionary journey. They follow an ordinary commercial route, at first, to Cyprus, a place well known to Barnabas. They go forth, perhaps like Abraham, "not knowing whither they went," but like him, also, sure of Divine guidance and of Divine protection. They go to perils unknown and dangers unimaginable by them beforehand. To this journey must be referred some of the incidents mentioned by Paul in his second Corinthian letter. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep ; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ; in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."⁴

¹ Acts xiii. 2, 3.

² Gal. i. 1.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 5.

⁴ 2 Cor. xi. 24-27.

They had a general plan of their journey. They were to begin with Cyprus, and after having evangelized Cyprus they were to take ship from its western coast to Asia Minor, and labour there as they could find opportunity. They were to act, unfettered by any definite instructions from Antioch, either as to the places they were to visit, or as to the length of time that should elapse before their return. How long this first journey lasted is uncertain; probably some three or four years. It was the most limited in extent of territory of all the missionary journeys. Not a fourth part of Asia Minor was reached, and the most westerly part was Antioch in Pisidia. But we must always remember that we have not a detailed account of the journey or of the incidents in it. We have only three chapters of the Acts to convey to us an impression of the work of three years or more. No doubt the impression may be adequate and accurate, but at the same time it is not detailed.

They took Mark with them and sailed to Cyprus. Here there was a large population, among which there were many Jews. We have no certain information as to their success among Jews or Greeks. But we have a somewhat full account of one remarkable conversion, that of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul. Ewald, writing some time ago, said, "This man who is not known to us from Roman accounts."¹ But the Bishop of Durham, writing in 1878, was able to refer to one of the inscriptions discovered by General Cesnola.² Bishop Lightfoot brings forward evidence, also, which makes it highly probable that Sergius Paulus is mentioned by the elder Pliny more than once. The title Proconsul, given to Sergius Paulus in the Acts of the Apostles, was also a source of perplexity to the commentators, and a favourite theme for those who denied the historical character of the book. It is instructive to read the various solutions offered, while it was believed that Luke had made a mistake; and the attacks also form instructive reading. Possibly other sources of perplexity may disappear also before the advance of further light. "It is now an unquestioned and unquestionable fact that all the provincial governors who represented the senate in imperial times, whatever magistracy they might have held previously, were styled officially proconsuls."³

¹ "History of Israel," vol. vii. p. 342.

² On "Supernatural Religion," p. 294.

³ Lightfoot on "Supernatural Religion," p. 293.

This is one of those touches of accuracy, which show thorough personal knowledge, and one on which a forger would never fall.

Paul and Barnabas had gone through the whole island, and had come to Paphos ere they met with the proconsul. Sergius Paulus, like many Romans of his time, had sought to learn somewhat of the Jewish religion. There were great attractions in it for the Roman mind, and many sought with great zeal to know what the Jews had to tell them. Sergius Paulus had in the course of his inquiries fallen into the hands of "a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus."¹ He was evidently one of those Jews who wandered far and wide over the world, and who, wherever they went, acted solely for their own advantage. He had come from the far East, the ancient home of sorcery. For he bore also the name of Elymas. What the arts were which he professed, and the secret doctrines he taught, it is of little consequence to determine. He may have professed that deeper knowledge of the future, and that more profound knowledge of nature and its secrets, which were the common stock-in-trade of the wandering Jewish sorcerers of the period. It is clear, however, that he had not satisfied the proconsul, who is called "a man of understanding."² The proconsul had heard of the arrival of Barnabas and Paul, and he sought to learn the word of God. He heard them willingly, and yielded his mind to the doctrine they taught and to the evidence they produced. He had heard, no doubt, of the Jewish expectation of the Messiah, and knew a little of the Jewish doctrine of the One God. Now he heard from Barnabas and Paul that the Messiah had come, and that He who had come had died for men.

It may well be that the means whereby Elymas withstood Paul and Barnabas, and sought to turn aside the proconsul from the faith, was to charge them with teaching a false doctrine of the Messiah. The Apostles spoke of the actual Messiah, and as they spoke the attention of the proconsul grew more intense, while the sorcerer strove to distract their attention and to thwart their endeavours. It was a striking scene, and the actors in it were also most striking. Here are the seeker after truth, the messengers of the truth, and the man who strove persistently to gainsay and overcome the truth. So persistent were his efforts, that he at last roused the indignation of the Apostle. Paul could no longer keep silence. He broke forth into impetuous words

¹ Acts xiii. 6.

² Ibid. xiii. 7.

of power. "O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right way of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season."¹ The words glow with zeal, and burn with righteous indignation; and the sorcerer quailed before their awful force. For with the words came the stroke of power; the judgment pronounced by Paul fell upon Elymas, and he felt that he was blind. It is not said that the blindness was permanent, rather is the contrary implied. His resistance ceased, and the proconsul believed. "Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord."² The deed and the word went together, and the impression made by the power of the deed confirmed the truth of the word, and the proconsul believed.

We know nothing further of the ministry in Cyprus. This incident is recorded, because it was conspicuous in itself, and in the prominence of the people who were actors in it. It was a signal encouragement to Paul, by whom such encouragement was sorely needed. His success was not yet conspicuous, but here was a sign which God had given him, and a pledge of further conquests for Christ. Luke unquestionably attaches great significance to it. For from this time he always calls the Apostle by the name Paul, as up to this time he has invariably called him Saul. The journey is now continued. Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia. They again took advantage of the ordinary route of trade. They remained for some time in Perga. We infer this from the statement in Acts xv. 38, 39, where we have an account of the controversy and separation between Paul and Barnabas. There seems to have been some hesitation as to whether they should prolong their journey beyond Perga. But when they had made up their minds to go on, Mark refused to accompany them; "John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem."³ It would therefore be necessary for them to wait some time in order to get some one to take the place of Mark. Ewald conjectures that the man who was now taken as assistant in Mark's place was Titus.⁴ However this may be, it is likely that they had to make some con-

¹ Acts xiii. 10, 11.

² Ibid. xiii. 12.

³ Ibid. xiii. 13.

⁴ "History of Israel," vol. vii. p. 315.

siderable delay, and the irritation caused by this unnecessary loss of time may have added strength to Paul's resolution not to take Mark with them again.

The next place to which they came was Antioch, in Pisidia, a considerable place, with a large Jewish population. It possessed a synagogue. Attached to the Jews were many proselytes, and beyond these there were many who took great interest in religious questions. We get an interesting glimpse of the synagogue and its mode of worship. Paul and Barnabas found their way to the synagogue, and quietly took their part in the worship, and listened to the reading of the law and the prophets. "Then the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, If ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."¹ Evidently this was the usual custom. Strangers might have a message from brethren at a distance, they might have interesting tidings to tell, or they might have some important word of explanation of the Scripture read. Instantly and promptly Paul responded to the invitation. The discourse which Luke has recorded is of unusual interest. It is evidently a specimen of Paul's usual mode of argument, and is here recorded as such. He speaks here to Jews, and he takes his stand on the ground common to him and them. He begins with the history of Israel. He traces that grand, glorious history down to David. God had chosen Israel, and God had given David to Israel. God had given a promise of a Saviour. This Saviour is to be of the seed of David. Then Paul sets forth that Jesus is this Saviour. He reminds them of the testimony of John the Baptist, that Jesus is the Saviour. "To you is the word of this salvation sent." True, the dwellers in Jerusalem and the rulers had condemned them, but in so doing they were fulfilling the voices of the prophets. The rulers did this in ignorance, because they knew Him not. That Jesus is the Saviour, then, is shown by His death, burial, and resurrection; and Paul ends by pleading with them to receive Jesus as their Saviour, as by Him alone could they receive remission of sins, and by warning them of the consequences of refusal.

A most powerful impression was made on all present. The substance of the discourse could not be forgotten through this week, and at their request Paul agreed to speak again the next sabbath. But he did not wait until the sabbath had come.

¹ Acts xiii. 15.

Nay, as the synagogue broke up, "many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas."¹ Thus a great opportunity was given to them, and they gladly and promptly took advantage of it. They spoke to the people there and then, and throughout the week as often as they could. The news spread abroad through the city, and roused the expectation of all who heard it. "And on the next Sabbath the whole city was gathered together to hear the Word of God."² They heard the Word with great gladness. Even the heathen were among those glad hearers and believers of the Word. The success of the Apostles among the heathen, and the great promptness with which they received Christianity, roused the envy of the Jews. They set themselves against Paul, contradicted him with violence, and railed against him and his Master. The words are suggestive of increasing intensity of opposition. "They were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed."³ Paul was not discouraged. Frankly, calmly, boldly, Paul and Barnabas told them that while they were bound in the first instance to speak the Word of God to the Jews, their mission was not to the Jews alone. If they thrust the offer of salvation from them, if they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, the Apostles would henceforth turn to the Gentiles. Nay, they further told the Jews that they had their warrant for this not only in the command of the Lord, but also in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. To the great joy of the Gentiles they thus interpreted the words of the Messianic prophecy: "I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost parts of the earth." They had come to read the Old Testament as the Jews had never read it. They laboured on with great success in the city and neighbourhood, and the longer they laboured the greater grew the enthusiasm of their converts and the wider did the good work spread, until "the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region." All this presupposes that they spent some considerable time in the city.

But their work in it was soon to end. The Jews, themselves powerless against the Apostles, sought help from those of greater social influence than they had. What grounds they urged we scarcely know. The Jewish community had here, as they had elsewhere, certain rights and privileges, and perhaps the plea

¹ Acts xiii. 43.

² Ibid. xiii. 44.

³ Ibid. xiii. 45.

was that the Apostles were not Jews, and had no right to disturb the Jewish community.¹ On some such ground as this they urged on "the devout women of honourable estate, and the chief men of the city," until a persecution arose against Paul and Barnabas, and they were compelled to leave Antioch. They left unwillingly, and as a protest against the injustice which cast them out, "they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium."² Though they were forced to depart, the results of their work remained, and so great was the enthusiasm of the young Christians, that the loss of their revered teachers could not destroy their Christian joy. A Christian Church was permanently established. Such successful work had not as yet been carried on anywhere, and with joyful hearts they went forth to break fresh ground. The events at Iconium were almost a repetition of what had happened at Antioch. They began work in the synagogue. They spoke with such power that a great multitude of Jews and Greeks believed. There was the same opposition on the part of the Jews, and an attempt by them to rouse the heathen against the Apostles. But they continued there a long time, and their ministry was with special power, not merely power of persuasion, but power of healing. They could do many mighty works because of the faith of the people, and because the Lord "bare witness unto the word of His grace."³ Party feeling, however, ran high ; the city was divided. The division did not coincide with the distinction of race. There were Jews and Gentiles on both sides. At length matters were coming to a crisis, and the Jews and Greeks were resolved to stone them : they became aware of it, and fled unto the cities of Lycaonia. Wherever they went they preached the gospel ; men gladly received them and believed their message.

In Lycaonia they had to work under new conditions. They had left the comparatively populous cities behind them. The range of the Taurus separated Lycaonia from the more cultivated regions of Cilicia and Pisidia. The populations also were of a ruder kind, partly shepherds, and partly robbers. They had passed also into a country not directly under the Roman government, and they would have no protection from it. They were among a people of strange speech, a speech which

¹ Ewald, "History of Israel," vol. vii. p. 347.

² Acts xiii. 51.

³ Ibid. xiv. 3.

Paul and Barnabas did not understand. It appears that there were comparatively few Jews in Lycaonia. We do not find any allusion to a synagogue either in the verses which record this first journey, or in those which tell of Paul's visit to this region again.¹ It may be also that the reason why Timothy had not been circumcised was that his mother and grandmother did not dare to have it done. At all events, though there were some Jews in that region, they were comparatively few. For the opposition to the Apostles was not raised by Jews who dwelt at Lystra, but by those who came from Antioch and Iconium.

Though far removed from the shelter of the equal government of Rome, and though among a people of strange ways and language, Paul and Barnabas had a message to these people. What they proclaimed to them may be gathered from the words spoken by Paul in Lystra. But, first, let us see the scene which gave occasion to these words. Paul was speaking in some public place at Lystra. Among his hearers was one who had been always a cripple and had never walked. Whether the cripple understood every word which Paul spoke we cannot say, but impressed with the bearing, tone, and attitude of the Apostle, he bent forward with new-born hope. Perhaps there may be some good news for him. May he not be able yet, through the power of the Apostle, to move freely as other men? Whatever was the outward form which his hope did take, it is evident from the narrative that faith had kindled in his heart. He believed in Paul's message and in Paul himself. So intent was his attitude and look that he drew to him the gaze of Paul. There was, there must have been, something strange and powerful in the gaze of Paul. An intense piercing, searching look his must have been, a look which caused men to feel that he could see into the very depths of their hearts. Such was the gaze he fastened² on Elymas the sorcerer; such was the look he bestowed on the council;³ and such is the gaze he fastens on the cripple. He looked at the kindling and expectant face of the cripple; he saw there the glow of faith and hope; and Paul spoke the word of power, said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped up and walked."⁴ He moved freely to and fro, trying the strength of limbs now used for the first time.

¹ Acts xvi. 1-5.

³ Ibid. xxiii. 1.

² Ibid. ix. 10.

⁴ Ibid. xiv. 10.

The multitude had also listened with interest to Paul. They may have been able to understand Greek, but it was evidently to them, at least partly, a foreign tongue. It was not the language which they would use in moments of excitement, or of deep emotion, or even in the familiar intercourse of home life. If they had really understood the meaning of what Paul had spoken they would have acted otherwise. But as soon as they saw the healing of the cripple, they cried out in the speech of Lycaonia, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men."¹ As in the olden time, thus their traditions ran, the gods had come down to punish the guilty, and right the wrongs of the innocent; so on the sight of this wondrous work they leapt to the conclusion that the two before them were gods. They hastened to make preparations for a loyal welcome to visitors supposed to be Divine. Barnabas they supposed to be Zeus, father of gods and men, and Paul they thought was Hermes, the messenger of the gods, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus soon appeared, with garlands and oxen, and with all other needed preparations for the sacrifice. The excitement in the city was tremendous, as may easily be imagined. But the feelings of the people fall into insignificance in the presence of the outraged feeling of horror and amazement which filled the hearts of Paul and Barnabas. No more horrible thing could be imagined by a Jew than to give Divine honours to a man. Their action showed the keenness of their feelings. With hasty steps, with outstretched arms, with rent garments—and for a Jew to rend his garments was a sign of unspeakable grief—and raised voices, they rushed among the multitude, to keep them from this great sin and crime. We have a report of the words which Paul spoke. words few and easy to be understood, yet words of unspeakable importance. It is likely they are the very words he spoke; the short speech is filled with Pauline phrases. Very characteristic of Paul is the phrase, "that ye should turn from these vain things to the living God."² The words of the speech before us burst vehemently from the lips of Paul. Unpremeditated, spoken on the spur of the moment, yet they rank among the wisest and best words ever spoken. They show us the kind of thoughts which habitually occupied the mind of Paul. The living God, the Maker of the world, His patience with the

¹ Acts xiv. 11.² Ibid. xiv. 15. Cf. 1 Thess. i. 10.

wandering nations, His witness of Himself which He has put into His works—surely these were habitual thoughts with the Apostle. “He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.”¹ The words thus spoken, and perhaps more, the vehement action of the apostles, hindered the multitude, and finally prevented them from carrying out their design.

In passing from these verses to the next we are conscious of an unpleasant change. We have just listened to the warm, genial, gracious words of the Apostle, so true in their representation of God, and so full of earnest sympathy with man; and we are next called on to read about the meanness, narrowness, spite, and hatred which man can bear to man. The Jews had dogged the steps of the Apostles from Iconium to Lystra, and pursued their policy of lawless fanaticism. At first sight one would think that here at Lystra they would not succeed. Had not the people been on the verge of worshipping Paul and Barnabas? How, then, could the Jews hope to arouse the populace against them? True, but superstition has never formed a good basis for justice, morality, religion. Frustrated in their purpose of offering sacrifice, they yet might be filled with uneasiness at the presence of such beings among them. Uneasiness would soon deepen into fear; and fear, become intense, shapes itself into cruelty. Thus the Jews would have a good foundation on which to build. Did the people tell the Jews of the wondrous work of Paul, they had the ready answer, that the works were done by the powers of evil. Paul and Barnabas were the servants of demons, deceivers of the people, who ought to be got rid of as speedily as possible. It was easy to work on the superstitious fears of the people. “Having persuaded the multitudes they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.”² He was certainly nigh unto death. “Once was I stoned,” he says, in that significant catalogue of perils and sufferings already quoted. The “once” reveals the people of Lystra in a pre-eminence not to be envied.

The disciples were, however, brave and loyal enough to stand by him in the hour of sore peril. They gathered round him as he lay senseless on the ground. He was not dead, though he

¹ Acts xiv. 17.

² Ibid. xiv. 19.

was never nearer death, and never in greater peril. As they stood round about him he rose up, bearing deep traces of the stormy peril through which he had passed. He went back into the city, and the disciples gave him shelter and hospitality for the night, and on the morrow Paul and Barnabas went forth to Derbe. They preached the gospel there and made many disciples. They had now got to the limit of their journey. Through many perils they had passed, but much good work had been done, and they felt that the gain was worth the cost. Now they return by the way they came. Back to Lystra, to the place where Paul had been stoned, to Iconium where their lives had been threatened, to Antioch from whence they had been cast out, they went. They felt that they must help to strengthen the disciples, confirm them in the faith, and, above all, tell them, as one of the first and most common truths they had to learn, "that through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God."¹ They seek in every place to found a permanent Christian society. They organized the churches, gave them men to teach and rule them, "appointed for them elders in every city," and commended them to the God in whom they believed. These were living communities, which, by the grace of God, were bound to grow. Then they passed through Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia, and thence to Antioch to the great mother Church which had sent them on their perilous way. Then "they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and how that He had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles. And they tarried no little time with the disciples."² Such is the scanty outline of the Apostles' work through this so-called first missionary journey. There must be much that is unrecorded, much omitted, and much that is summarised in a sentence. The notes of time are few, and the incidents mentioned not many. There is enough, however, to reveal to us how great was the undertaking, how many were the perils they met, and with what steadfast courage and endurance; patience and wisdom, they proceeded to their mighty task. The first journey, though in a smaller field, had as great results both for preachers and people as any other had. It gave the Apostles courage and experience; it laid the foundations of many Churches, which had a great and fruitful history.

¹ Acts xiv. 22.

² Ibid. xiv. 27, 28.

CHAPTER V.

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM.

Nature of the controversy about circumcision—Its origin—Trouble caused by it at Antioch—Epistle to the Galatians and the Acts of the Apostles—Certain views of the critics—Proceedings at the council—The decision—The decree—Return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch—Dispute between Paul and Barnabas—Its occasion—The separation between them.

IN the meantime matters at Antioch had come to a crisis. The question of the relation of the communities which Paul had formed, and of the gospel which he preached, to the original Churches, and to the gospel of the Twelve, had become a burning one. As we have mentioned already, it had not been raised at Antioch, nor by any member of the Church at Antioch. It was an important question. "Certain men came down from Judæa, and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved."¹ It may be that these are the same people, at all events they are the same kind of people, as those mentioned in the Epistle to the Galatians, as the "false brethren,"² and as "certain that came from James."³ In St. Paul's account of the matter stress is laid by him on his own action and his own position. His knowledge of the gospel, and his commission to preach, were not derived from any human source or authority. Jesus Christ had sent him forth, as He had sent the Twelve. St. Paul had been at no pains to consult them, nor to co-operate with them. For the space of fourteen years—either from his conversion, or from his

¹ Acts xv.

² Gal. ii. 4.

³ Ibid. ii. 12.

visit to Peter at Jerusalem—he had gone his own way, and done his own work. But now that attitude of independence could no longer be maintained. For the two modes of work and their results had come into sharp collision. The Gentile Churches had been organized without regard to Jewish prejudices, and with no respect to the law of Moses. They had liberty in Christ Jesus. The exercise of that liberty had become offensive to the Jewish Christians, who had never broken with the law, nor freed themselves from the observance of the customs. They, indeed, maintained the continued obligation of the Mosaic law, and while they might be prepared to receive Gentiles into the Church, they did so on the condition that they were to be circumcised.

With great skill the Jewish party limited the controversy to the one question of circumcision. Such a limitation gave them a great advantage. So much might be said with regard to the necessity of circumcision which could not be urged on behalf even of the Mosaic law, and certainly not on behalf of any of the later customs which were sanctioned only by the traditions of the elders. Circumcision was before the law, it dated from Abraham; it was the necessary sign to be borne by every member of the community of the true religion; Christ Himself, and all the Apostles, even St. Paul, had been circumcised. Surely, then, it was only reasonable and right that circumcision should be regarded as necessary for salvation. Those that came from Judæa might in addition have urged the practice of the Church at Jerusalem, which clung as closely as possible to, and minimised as far as they could their separation from, the ancient religion of Israel. If the Jewish party had won the battle on the question of circumcision they would have obtained a complete victory. It was, therefore, necessary that it should be fought out on this issue. “Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them,”¹ but to no purpose. The issue was clear. Were there to be two Churches, one organized on the ground of keeping the law of Moses, and another organized without reference to the law? It would seem as if the risk was great, that the Church was to be broken up into two sharply divided sects; that there was to be a Jewish Church with its centre at Jerusalem, and a Gentile Church with its head-quarters at Antioch, and between the two there would be constant opposition. To St. Paul it was made

¹ Acts xv. 2.

clear that he must go up to Jerusalem. "I went up by revelation, and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately before them who were of repute."¹ He asked them, Was it possible that he was spending or had spent his labour in vain? The result was, as Paul states in Galatians, that they recognised his work as a special work of God, and on the same level of authority as their own.

When we turn to the account given in the Acts of the Apostles we find that it touches on many matters not referred to in the Epistle to the Galatians. Paul does not speak of the Church at Antioch, nor of the fact that "the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question."² We assume that the two accounts refer to the same event, as indeed most people do at present. But on the question of the relation of these two accounts, whether they are in irreconcilable contradiction, or whether they can be harmonized, much has been written within recent years. Dr. Hatch gives a summary of the controversy, and a reference to the writers on either side, to which we refer the reader. It would be beside our purpose to enter at any length into the controversy. "The main points of difficulty," says Dr. Hatch,³ "are these: 1. The Acts say that Paul went up by appointment of the brethren at Antioch; Paul himself says he went up 'by revelation.' 2. In the Acts Paul has a subordinate position; in his own account he treats with the three on equal terms. 3. In the Acts Peter and James are on Paul's side from the first; in Galatians they are so only at the end of the conference, and after a discussion. 4. The Acts make the conference result in a decree, in which certain observances are imposed upon the Gentiles; Paul himself expressly declares that the only injunction was that they should remember the poor." Dr. Hatch has summed up the matter in these four positions with great fairness and lucidity. When we consider them, we do not find them so difficult or so important as the vast literature on the subject would have led us to suppose. As to the first point, there is no difficulty in saying that Paul went up by revelation, and by appointment of the Church. These two do not exclude one another. As to the second point, we must remember that Paul speaks of a private conference

¹ Gal. ii. 2.

² Acts xv. 2.

³ "Enc. Brit." vol. xviii. p. 418b.

with the three "pillars," and Luke is giving an account of a public assembly. Nor is there anything to show that Paul is in a subordinate position. Both he and the "three" are in precisely the same position ; all are in the council on the same footing with the Apostles and elders, and if there be any question of subordination at all they are all for the time subordinate to James. The same remark applies to the third difficulty. In the private conference Paul made his statement and gave his reasons for his conduct, and stated the gospel which he preached, and won their approval ; and consequently at the meeting of the whole Church which took place afterwards he was on their side. As to the fourth point we may let Pfleiderer¹ dispose of it. "The further possibility appears to me not altogether out of the question, namely, that after an agreement had been come to in Jerusalem as to the chief matter, the other points were subsequently discussed, in some such way as this : that on the Jewish side the expectation was expressed, and on the other side the promise was given, that the Gentile Christians should continue as before to observe the proselytes' commands, in order that no offence might be given to the consciences of the Jews in the Diaspora. Such a subsidiary agreement which followed, almost as a matter of course, Paul might very well all along ignore, while the author of the Acts was acquainted with it through the traditions of the Church at Antioch, and looked upon it as the principal matter of the contract, inasmuch as he possessed no particular information about the more personal arrangements come to between Paul and the First Church. In this way a reconciliation of the two accounts may be conceived as at all events not impossible."

The tone and attitude of Pfleiderer are in remarkable contrast to those of such writers as Schwegler, Zeller, Baur, Hilgenfeld, and others who, for the last half-century, have discussed this question. We need not even examine the opinion that the opponents of Paul were the original Apostles themselves, nor the view that the accounts in Galatians or the Acts are in irreconcilable contradiction. These views are no doubt current in some quarters, but after the discussions which have taken place, and the concessions made by such a man as Pfleiderer, we may disregard them. We may, however, before leaving the subject,

¹ The Hibbert Lecture, pp. 110-111.

refer to Lechler's "Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times"¹ for a full discussion of the whole question. We quote again from Pfeiderer: "Moreover, I am of opinion that this question has not in reality the importance which is often attached to it; for whether the removal of this special difference is thought to be possible or not, appears to me to be of quite secondary moment in view of the unquestionable fact, that with regard to the real meaning and object of the apostles' agreement, the accounts of Paul and the Acts conduct to essentially unanimous results. I find these results in the following three points:—1. The freedom of Gentile Christians from the Jewish law was conceded. 2. The continuance of the validity of that law in the case of Jewish Christians was pre-supposed as a matter of course. 3. The restrictive conditions of the agreement were meant, in the minds of the Jewish Christians, to protect the legal position of Jewish Christianity from all the dangers which threatened it from contact with Heathen Christians, and to assimilate the relation of Heathen to Jewish Christians to that of proselytes and Jews, or of partial members to full members of the kingdom of God."²

Accepting this testimony as far as it goes, we now resume the story as told in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul and Barnabas, having Titus with them, proceed to Jerusalem. They are helped on their way by the Churches in the places through which they pass. They go through Phœnicia and Samaria, and wherever they come they make the Churches glad by telling them of the conversion of the Gentiles. When they arrive at Jerusalem they are "received of the church and the apostles and the elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with them."³ But it was otherwise with the Church at Jerusalem than it was with the Churches in Phœnicia and Samaria. There their tidings had caused great joy, here there are opposition and criticism. "There rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses."⁴ It is significant that the first note of opposition came from the Pharisees. Though they believed, they were still Pharisees. They had not come to feel, as St. Paul had felt, the inner contra-

¹ Published by T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh.

² Hibbert Lecture, pp. 111, 112.

³ Acts xv. 4.

⁴ Ibid. xv. 5.

diction between the Pharisaic life and the life in Christ, nor had they seen how great was the absurdity of fastening this burden on the Gentile Christians. With earnestness and simplicity they set forth their view, and now the Church must take up the question and settle it.

Not at that first meeting was the Church prepared to enter fully on this most perplexing and important question. It was postponed to a subsequent day. Even in the account in Acts there is room left, we see, for all that Paul describes in Galatians. The appointed day came, "and the apostles and elders were gathered together to consider of this matter."¹ It was the first gathering of the universal Church, and it met to decide the most momentous question ever submitted to a Christian assembly. The question was debated in a public, proper, and deliberate manner. All in the assembly, whether elder or Apostle, and apparently also a private member without official standing, were at liberty to speak. Nor were they all of one mind at the outset. There was much questioning,² and a long debate. Of all the speeches which were made, only two are reported to us by Luke, and these are given because they were the most influential in deciding the matter. The one is from Peter, the other by James. Peter begins by reminding them that a good while ago he had preached the gospel to the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles had believed. This he had done not of his own will, but because he had been chosen by God to do that work. This work of Peter, commanded by God, was also attested by God. For God gave them the Holy Ghost. "He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith." The point of his argument evidently is, if faith purifies the heart, why should they lay so much stress on circumcision? If the hearts of the Gentiles could be purified by faith without circumcision, then the latter was not only unnecessary, it was a tempting of God. "Why tempt ye God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they."³ It was a bold, emphatic declaration of the truth that the grace of God in Christ is the ruling principle of Christianity. Whosoever believed in Christ, and looked in faith to Him alone for salvation, was a Christian, and even

¹ Acts xv. 6.

² Ibid. xv. 7.

³ Ibid. xv. 10, 11.

believing Jews had no other claim to be regarded as Christians. They are saved just as the Gentiles are saved.

This clear statement on the part of Peter had a great effect on all present. There was silence on all sides. Even the Pharisaic party had nothing to say. Advantage was taken of this time of calm and silence by Barnabas and Paul. For once Luke puts the name of Barnabas before that of Paul. Evidently it was Barnabas who at this stage was put forward in order to tell the wondrous story of their doings among the Gentiles. There may have been reasons for this procedure; for Barnabas was one who had pleasant relations with all parties, and all had the most complete confidence in him. The Church of Jerusalem in particular had good grounds for confidence in him. Paul, on the other hand, was not so well known to them, and perhaps they had not the same confidence in him. At all events, the main burden of the work fell on Barnabas, and he rehearsed "what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles."¹ His words were evidently not controversial. It was rather a statement of facts. But, in truth, facts in these circumstances were the most conclusive kind of argument. The Gentiles had believed on Christ, and on them the Holy Ghost had been poured. If these things were so, was the Church at Jerusalem to take the responsibility of reversing this work, which so manifestly had the Divine blessing? It brought home to every one a deep sense of responsibility. As on a similar occasion Peter had said, "Who was I, that I could withstand God?"² so here every one felt the same solemn feeling of responsibility. For even the Pharisaic party were Christian men, and though some of them afterwards forgot the feeling of this time, yet for the moment they were so impressed that they kept silence. They held their peace, silenced if not convinced.

This silence gave opportunity to James, who presided over the assembly, to bring the whole discussion to an end. He summed up the chief points of the debate, and indicated what, in his opinion, the decision ought to be. His speech is remarkable, and appropriate to the circumstances and to what we know of him. He begins by a reference to the speech of Peter as the most important and decisive in the whole discussion. It is characteristic also that he calls him by the old Hebrew name,

¹ Acts xv. 12.

² Ibid. xi. 17.

Symeon—perhaps the name by which Peter was best known among the churches of Jerusalem. He tells them that Peter had rehearsed “how God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name.”¹ This was indeed to be expected, for the Old Testament had foretold the conversion of all the heathen, and had they read the Old Testament rightly, what Peter had told them would not have surprised them. He then quotes the following passage from Amos ix. 11:—

“After these things I will return,
And I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen,
And I will build up the ruins thereof,
And I will set it up :
That the residue of men may seek after the Lord,
And all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called,
Saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from the beginning of
the world.”

Having confirmed the opinion of Peter by the authority of the Old Testament, James proceeds to give his own view—a view not quite so liberal as that of Peter, but one more likely to be agreeable to all present. Besides, it is an evidence of the historical character of the account in the Acts of the Apostles, and more in harmony with the character of James himself, that he should proceed to lay down some restrictions on the liberty granted to the Gentile Churches. Peter had spoken in an absolute way ; James was more cautious. He proposes that while they are to be freed from the obligation of being circumcised, they shall observe the restrictions which the proselytes also observed. “Wherefore my judgment is,” he says, “that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles turn to God ; but that we write unto them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood.”² These were the requirements made by the Jews in the case of proselytes. The next sentence of his speech throws light on the kind of arguments which had been used by the Pharisaic party in the course of the discussion. They had apparently urged that, if the proposed liberty were granted to the Gentiles, the Mosaic law and the Scriptures of the Old Testament would fall into disuse, would be neglected and despised. To this James answers that “Moses from generations of old hath in every city them

¹ Acts xv. 14.

² Ibid. xv. 19, 20.

that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”¹ In every Gentile city in which there were a Jewish community and a synagogue, the Old Testament Scriptures were read by men appointed for the purpose. There was no likelihood that that custom would cease, nor that Moses would cease to be read in the synagogue. It was likely, indeed, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament would continue to be read not only in the Jewish synagogues, but also in the Gentile Churches ; and this was evidently the hope of James.

The discussion was at an end, and the decision was speedily arrived at. It is worthy of note that this is the last occasion on which Peter appears, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. It was an occasion worthy of him, and his last words, as recorded in the Acts, are a fitting crown to all he has said and done. The other actors and speakers we shall meet again, but we hear no more of Peter.

Having come to a decision, it remained to carry it into effect. Practical measures were taken in order to make known the mind of the Jerusalem Church. It was natural that they should take particular care that it should be known at Antioch, the place and Church where the matter had come to a crisis. Nor did they merely send Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch to make known the result ; they sent with them other men—men who had taken no part in the dispute. These were “Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren.”² Of Judas nothing further is known, but Silas became the companion of Paul in the work, in the perils, and in the sufferings of the second missionary journey. The decision is as follows : “The apostles and the elder brethren unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting : Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls ; to whom we gave no commandment : it seemed good unto us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things ; that ye abstain

¹ Acts xv. 21

² Ibid. xv. 22.

from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication : from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well." ¹

As for the reasons we have already examined, doubt has been cast on the fact of this gathering at Jerusalem, so for other reasons it is argued that no such decree as this was ever sent forth. It is worth while to examine these. Let us first note, however, that the decree secures all for which Paul and Barnabas had contended. Negatively, the action of the partisans who had raised the question is declared to have been unauthorised. Neither their aim, nor the means they took to accomplish it, were sanctioned by the apostles. Nay, their practice is described in words which imply severe condemnation. It is "subverting your souls." Positively, the dignity, the trustworthiness, and apostolic character of Paul and Barnabas are expressly recognised. They are spoken of as "men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Gentiles are also recognised as members of the Christian Church. They are the "brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia." On all these points there is essential agreement between the Acts and the Epistle to the Galatians.

But says Baur : "We cannot find the terms of the decree which, according to the Acts of the Apostles, was arrived at, and this for the natural reason that, according to the Epistle to the Galatians, such a decree never existed at all. That it is not accidentally omitted, with all that belongs to it, is incontestably shown in the Epistle to the Galatians, as also in the rest of the Apostle's Epistles. In the Epistle to the Galatians the Apostle contends with the Judaizing opponents, who were desirous of imposing circumcision on the Galatian Church as a necessary condition of salvation (Gal. v. 1). In order to do this the apostle explains his entire relations to the ἀποστολή τῆς περιτομῆς. What would forward this more than an appeal to the decree?" ²

When, however, we turn to the Epistle to the Galatians and read it carefully, we find the question is no longer whether the Mosaic law, and specially the rite of circumcision, should be imposed on the Gentiles, but whether the Jewish Christians,

¹ Acts xv. 23-29.

² "Paul : His Life and Works," vol. i. p. 134.

in their intercourse with the Gentiles, should be bound by ancient restrictions and restrained by the fetters of the law. Now, this is a question which might well arise after the other had been settled. Suppose it to have been determined by authority that the Gentiles ought to be free from the burden of the law, that decision of itself did not determine the question of the social intercourse between Jew and Gentile. Now, the latter is the matter in dispute between Peter and Paul in the controversy at Antioch, and it would be nothing to the purpose for Paul to quote the decree on a matter to which it did not refer. This question, therefore, must be settled on its own merits. In truth, the state of matters at Antioch presupposes some such solution of the problem of the relation of Gentile Christians to the Mosaic law as is embodied in the decree of the Council of Jerusalem; for it turns, not on the standing of Gentile Christians, but on the conduct of Jewish Christians. Could the latter also set aside the burden of the law, at least so far as to eat with the Gentiles? So Peter apparently thought; at least, so he did when he came to Antioch. This is what he refrained from doing when certain came from James, and it was this conduct that called forth the remonstrance of Paul.

The freedom of the Gentiles from the burden of the law would speedily raise the question of the relation of the Jewish Christians to the law. But the speedy disappearance of the discussion as to the necessity of circumcision from other Epistles of Paul implies that some such settlement of the question was reached as that recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Many causes of bitterness no doubt remained, but the source of them all lay not in what Paul taught the Gentiles, but in what he was supposed to teach the Jews. "Many thousands there are among the Jews of them that have believed; and they are all zealous for the law; and they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs."¹ It would appear, then, that many, or at least some, Jews had claimed the liberty they had in the gospel, and that exaggerated reports of this had reached Jerusalem, and they at Jerusalem supposed that Paul had taught them this. But this is evidently a state of matters which the decree did not touch, nor can we say with Baur,

¹ Acts xxi. 20, 21.

“that it was incumbent on the Apostle not to leave such a decree entirely unnoticed in a case on which it so specially bore.”¹ A deeper analysis of the historical situation has shown us that the decree has really no bearing on questions which arose subsequent to its promulgation. There are many other considerations which tend to the same conclusion; but let these suffice.

The other general commandments made binding on the Gentile Christians were declared to be necessary things. “They are to abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication.” The latter stands on a somewhat different footing from the others. As true religion could not exist without domestic virtue and a true and pure family life, so abstinence from fornication is a necessary duty in the nature of the case; but as regards the other three, they have no absolute basis, and may lapse when the occasion of them has passed away. They were necessary at the time, and until the danger from idolatry had passed away.

We return to the narrative. The work of Paul and Barnabas at Jerusalem was finished, and now there was no further cause for delay. They, and Judas and Silas along with them, returned to Antioch. Luke tells us nothing either of the route by which they travelled, or of any events which happened during the journey. Having arrived at Antioch, they gathered the multitude together, gave to them an account of the proceedings at Jerusalem, and delivered the epistle, “And when they had read it, they rejoiced for the consolation.”² Then came a time of quiet and fruitful work at Antioch. Here Judas and Silas had full opportunity for the exercise of their ministry. They were prophets, so called not so much because this was a distinct order in the Church, as to indicate the kind of gift they possessed. It was clearly a gift for exhortation, for comfort, and for confirmation in the hope of the gospel. For some time they continued in the work, and then “they were dismissed in peace from the brethren unto those that had sent them forth.”³ A feeling of pathos comes over us as we read the next verse, which records the last period of joint labour on the part of Paul and Barnabas. For many years they had been together, and

¹ Baur, “Paul,” vol. i. p. 134.

² Acts xv. 31.

³ Ibid. xv. 33.

had shared together the joys and perils of missionary work. They had faced the perils of the sea, and of the land; they had proclaimed Christ together in many strange cities; they had fought a great fight for the freedom of the gospel, and they had won it. And for a time "Paul and Barnabas tarried in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also."¹ One feels inclined to linger here, because of reluctance to go on to witness the next scene. One feels regret that Paul and Barnabas had to separate after so many years of loving friendship and mutual helpfulness; but the regret deepens when we know that they parted in anger, never to meet again. May we not well think that Paul often looked back to the time when this faithful and true friend was his fellow-worker, to the time when Barnabas took him by the hand when all others were suspicious of him, to the time when Barnabas found him at Tarsus, and led him forth to work? Yes! and to many other occasions when the friend was beside him, whose face he was never to see again. Nor can we think of Barnabas, that good man, without supposing that he also was filled with sorrow, both at the parting itself and at the cause and manner of it.

The occasion of the quarrel may be briefly told. Paul felt anxious about the Churches he had founded, and finding that the work at Antioch could go on without them, now that the crisis was past, proposed to Barnabas that they should visit the brethren in every city wherein they had preached, and see how they fared. They were agreed as to the journey itself, and as to the object and purpose of it. They disagreed about their companion. "Barnabas was minded to take with them John also, who was called Mark."² The feelings of Barnabas, and his natural affection for his kinsman, may have influenced him. But yet not altogether. For the record of work afterwards done by Mark, his subsequent relation to Peter, who calls him "my son,"³ and also to Paul himself,⁴ show the stuff of which he was made. Even if in faintness of heart he turned back, when Paul and Barnabas went forward on their perilous way, this might not have been remembered, since he was ready to accompany them now. But Paul would not have "him who withdrew from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work."⁵ He could not forget the shame and agony he felt

¹ Acts xv. 35.

² Ibid. xv. 37.

³ 1 Peter v. 13.

⁴ Col. iv. 10.

⁵ Acts xv. 38.

at Mark's desertion of them, nor the trouble and confusion occasioned by his departure. So, apparently, not on personal grounds, but as a matter of duty, Paul resolved not to take him. Barnabas insisted on his purpose, and Paul would not yield. "And there arose a sharp contention"—"a paroxysm"—"so that they parted asunder one from the other,"¹ to meet no more. The pain and pang of parting were enhanced by the remembrance of what they had been to one another. They may have known each other in youth; may together have studied at Tarsus, for to it young people came for study from all the surrounding provinces; and they may have met in after years in the streets of Jerusalem. Certainly, however, they had been friends for many years, when this wrathful and sorrowful separation came. We may not dwell on it, nor seek to say who was in the right. Every man feels the sorrow and the pain of it too much to speak many words about it, and we are sure that no one felt the sorrow and pain so much as the chief actors in it. Each without the other must have felt as if shorn of half his strength. In truth, the sharpness of the contention arose out of the depths of their affection and esteem for one another. Each felt injured that his friend should oppose what he desired so keenly.

"That to be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain,
And each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother,
They parted—ne'er to meet again,
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining;
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder."²

¹ Acts xv. 39.

² S. T. Coleridge, "Christabel," quoted also by E. H. Plumptre in the same connection, in his work, "St. Paul in Asia Minor," p. 25.

CHAPTER VI.

IN ASIA MINOR.

Chronology—Dates of events in the Apostle's life, and of Epistles written by him—His new and wider work—His hopes and aims—The extent of his work as indicated in his Epistles—His journeys, dangers, and labours—Work of Paul and Silas in Lycaonia, Phrygia, and Galatia—Timothy—The Galatians—The Epistle to the Galatians, and its teaching.

THE meeting of the Church at Jerusalem, and the promulgation of the decree which went forth from it, are events of unusual importance in the life of the Apostle. The full recognition of his standing as an Apostle, and the emphatic approval of the Church, must have given him comfort and strength. How long he had laboured alone, and how long he had worked in company with Barnabas! And now he is to enter on a wider field than ever. If we reckon that the meeting of council was in 51 or 52 A.D., and if we also reckon the period from his conversion as seventeen years, then the date of his conversion was in the year 34 or 35. As, however, we are uncertain whether to add the three years in Arabia to the fourteen years mentioned in Gal. ii. 2, or to include them in the space of fourteen years, we are unable to fix precisely the date of his conversion. But from this point onward, to the time of his arrival at Rome, we have comparatively full accounts of all his movements. Not many years of work remained to him. As Felix the Procurator was recalled from Palestine in the year 61 A.D., and as Paul had been two years a prisoner at Cæsarea at the time of the recall of Felix, not more than seven or eight years of work remained to him before

his imprisonment began. Certainly this most productive period of his life cannot exceed a period of ten years. How much work of all kinds he compressed within these years, how many journeys, how many Churches founded and guided, how many Epistles written! It is wonderful how his strength bore the strain of the work and anxiety. To this period belong the two Epistles to the Thessalonians, written probably in the year 53, 1 Corinthians in the spring, and 2 Corinthians in the summer of 58, the Epistle to the Galatians in the year 58, and the Epistle to the Romans in the following spring.

The result of the work of these few years ranks far above what he had been able to accomplish in the former period of his missionary activity. He is no longer to be engaged in work in Cilicia and in Asia Minor, laying foundations on which other men were to build; he now goes forth to the conquest of the cities of the Roman Empire. He takes the Gentile world for his province. He has been recognised by the Jerusalem Church as the Apostle of the Gentiles. He has a free hand, and he may set to work wherever the door is open, and by whatever method seems best fitted for the great aim he has in view. He had gone up to Jerusalem to prove that he had not been running in vain.¹ He left it with the approval of the other Apostles on all he had done, and with their emphatic wish that he should continue his work among the Gentiles. We find from the Epistles which we have enumerated above, how great was the impression made on his mind by the recognition of his office and work as Apostle of the Gentiles. To him it was not an office which brought rank, it was a trust he had to discharge. It made him "debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish."² This was no mere feeling on his part, not an ideal setting-forth of the nature and extent of his vocation as an Apostle; it was a simple statement of fact. He belonged to the nations in virtue of his office, and he had to work out the problem with all his strength. The other Apostles were bound to see to it that the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached to all the seed of Abraham wherever they might be, and Paul was bound to overtake the Gentile world and preach Christ to them. He felt the pressure of a Divine necessity, and he must preach the gospel.

As we turn over the pages of his Epistles, looking for allusions

¹ Gal. ii. 2.

² Rom. i. 14.

to the places in which he had exercised his ministry, we find references to many visits and many journeys of which the Acts of the Apostles gives only a slight account. We have in the Acts no reference to the visit to the Eastern shores of the Adriatic mentioned in the following verse: "So that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."¹ We gather from the Epistles allusions both to what he had done, and to what he yet hoped to do. It was a settled purpose of his to see Rome, but to see it as a stage in a further journey which he hoped to take to Spain.² He was resolved to reach the most Western limit of the land in his endeavour to win all for Christ. Two limits he placed to himself, and to his work. His was to be a mission not to the Jews, but to the Gentiles. He does not exclude the Jews. He will preach Christ to them in their synagogues if he has opportunity, but he does this only that he may more effectively reach the Gentiles. A second and more definite limit he set to himself, in the resolution not to build on any other man's foundation.³ The apparent exception to this rule of his, is the Epistle to the Romans, a Church he had never seen nor visited when he wrote to them. But he felt he must write to them, because he had been so often hindered when he had purposed to come to them. He longed to do something for the Church of Christ which was in the midst of the peoples assembled in the great capital of the Roman world.

Following out the hints in the Epistles, we may fill up the vague outline of the verse in which he speaks of preaching the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum. We shall do this in the first place without having recourse to the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, as we shall then be better able to judge as to whether the two accounts harmonize with one another. It is not necessary that we understand the expression from Jerusalem to Illyricum in such a way as to suppose that he passed through all the intervening provinces in geographical order. But we know that he laboured in all these provinces—Asia, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia. For he has many allusions to each of them. From the First Epistle to the Thessalonians we learn that the gospel was believed by them, "so that they became an ensample to all that believed in Macedonia and

¹ Rom. xv. 19.

² Ibid. xv. 24.

³ 2 Cor. x. 16.

Achaia.”¹ We learn also from the same Epistle of the Apostle’s visit to Athens; for he was so concerned for the Thessalonian Church, that he sent Timothy to them, and was content to be left alone at Athens.² Then the same Epistle tells us of Philippi, and of the manner in which he had been treated there. “He had been shamefully entreated,”³—a statement which we find in substance again in another Epistle: “And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no Church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need.”⁴ In what he calls the beginning of the gospel, Paul had been at Philippi, had passed from Philippi to Thessalonica, and from Thessalonica to Athens and to Corinth.

Turning to the First Epistle to the Corinthians, we can trace the Apostle’s footsteps from Corinth to Ephesus, for he tells the Corinthians that “I will tarry at Ephesus till Pentecost, for a great door and effectual is opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”⁵ Thus we get the order of the journey—Macedonia, Achaia, Asia. But from the same chapter we learn that the Churches of Galatia had been founded by him some time before he had written the First Epistle to the Corinthians. For in it he speaks of the instruction he had given to the Churches of Galatia regarding the collection.⁶ It is curious that we know so little regarding Paul’s work in Galatia. We know that he had been twice in it; that he had, indeed, not intended to preach the gospel in Galatia, but having been laid prostrate by sickness he was detained among them, and to this they owed their knowledge of the gospel. We need not inquire too curiously as to the precise time when he visited Galatia, nor into the length of time which elapsed between the visits. For the present aim it is sufficient to show how this allusion falls into rank with all the others, and the uncertainty about Galatia serves only to bring into prominence the fact that he had set his heart on bearing the gospel message to the West, to the most remote boundary of the Roman Empire.

We also get a glimpse, when we search for it, of the many journeys and expeditions he made throughout these provinces. He had been twice in the province of Galatia. We trace in the

¹ 1 Thess. i. 7.

² Ibid. iii. 1.

³ Ibid. ii. 2.

⁴ Phil. iv. 15, 16.

⁵ 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9.

⁶ Ibid. xvi. 1.

First Epistle to the Thessalonians his journey from Philippi to Corinth, as we have already seen. From the Second Epistle to the Corinthians we see that he had been a second time through the same regions, and perhaps also a third time. While there are thus many definite allusions to his journeys, there are also many allusions which are not so definite. In passages wrung from him reluctantly, in order to defend himself against accusers, in many casual reflections by the way, we learn how manifold were his labours and how unceasing was his toil.¹ He never brings them forward for their own sake, but always because of their bearing on some other topic. In these few years, from the time of the council at Jerusalem to his capture at Jerusalem, what a work he has accomplished, what conquests for Christ he has made ! Well may he say, that from Jerusalem to the shores of the Adriatic he has preached the gospel of Christ.

From this brief account we have gained some results. We see at the outset that the order of Paul's journey and the places he visited are the same in his Epistles and in the Acts of the Apostles—Macedonia, Achaia, Asia, or to take the cities, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus. The order is the same in both, and each confirms the other. We may note also that from the sixteenth chapter of the Acts we have the narrative of an eye-witness and companion of Paul. Nor need there be any hesitation in saying that the eye-witness is Luke himself, who, from the traditions of the various Churches, and perhaps also from written documents, had gathered together the accounts given in the first part of the Acts of the Apostles. But in the latter part he speaks in the first person, and tells us what he has himself seen and heard. We shall have to notice that there are some passages in which the third person is used ; places there are where Paul was, and Luke was not with him. These shall be noted in their order.

Meanwhile let us observe what Luke tells us, not only in the chapters in which he uses the first person, but throughout the whole book. He is careful to tell us of the planting of the Church, and of the way in which Churches were founded in the various cities and provinces of the Roman Empire. He is not careful to tell us of their subsequent history, of the trials they had to endure, the temptations they overcame, or of their pro-

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 13 ; iii. 5.

gress in life and doctrine. In fact, from the Acts of the Apostles we learn little of the inner life of the Churches, of the heresies which vexed them, or of the contentions which threatened to rend them asunder. From the Acts we should never have learnt of the controversies and the parties within the Church at Corinth, nor of the various vexations that harassed the Churches of Galatia. It is well, indeed, to note the fact ; it is not so well to draw inferences from the fact, such as have been drawn by the Tübingen school and others. We may not infer from it that the Acts of the Apostles is a document written in the interests of peace, in which all difficulties are slurred over and buried out of sight. For we find the same silence maintained by Luke, not only with regard to the Church at Corinth, but with regard to the work of Paul at Ephesus, in which Church there seems to have been no dispute. It seems to have been his purpose to tell how the Church spread from Jerusalem to Antioch ; how in Antioch it made a fresh start, and took a new departure ; and then to tell how from Antioch the gospel spread over all the provinces of the Roman Empire till it reached Rome itself. Let the Church be founded in any place, and we find that Luke tells us not much about it afterwards. He may tell us that the Apostles visited it again, and confirmed the disciples in the faith ; but that is all. Even when he recounts the story of the controversies in the Church at Antioch, he does it as shortly as possible. It cannot be said, then, that he slurs over difficulties which emerged in any Church after it was founded, when all he tells us of any Church is the story of its founding. He tells us of the difficulties and perils and dangers which Paul met when he began to preach in any place. He narrates the story of the stoning of Paul at Lystra, of the danger he was in, and the cruel treatment he met at Philippi, of the uproar at Ephesus ; but these incidents are all connected with the founding of a Church, and not with its after-history. The Acts of the Apostles is not a history of the Church, from the time of the ascension of our Lord until the arrival of Paul at Rome ; in truth, it can hardly be called a history of the Church at all ; it is a history of the planting of the Church. We are not to expect from it—at least we do not get from it—any account of the work of any particular Church, but we do get from it a vivid and rapid narrative of the spread of Christianity.

We now go to the Acts of the Apostles, to trace the further

progress of the Apostle. He had separated from Barnabas, and he chose a new companion. Silas, one of the two sent from Jerusalem to tell what the decision of the Church there was regarding the Pharisaic pretensions of the Jewish party, himself a prophet, was the companion chosen by Paul. Their first work was to visit the places to which Paul and Barnabas had gone when Mark refused to go with them. "He went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches."¹ He went forth also with the blessing of the Church at Antioch, being commended by them to the grace of God. He went also with growing confidence, resolved to follow whithersoever his Master led him. He had evidently no route marked out beforehand, nor did he know what were to be the extent and limits of his journey. He must see the Churches he had already founded, and then press onwards and Westwards as he found opportunity. He could not have expected to have his path free from hindrances. From the First Epistle to the Thessalonians we gather that there was an organized opposition on the part of the Jews against him. Instructions would seem to have been sent from Jerusalem to all the synagogues forbidding them to help Paul.² Add to this also that about this time "Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome,"³ and we see that difficulties of an unusually grave kind lay in his path. But he went onwards.

He came also to Derbe and Lystra, the place where he had been stoned, and there he found a Church in good heart and hope; a Church, too, which had not been idle during his absence. It had evidently increased, and had gathered into the fold not a few. One of these, and perhaps one of the youngest of them, Paul found to be very helpful to him in the work. Timothy had been well trained and well taught. The unfeigned faith which was in him dwelt first in his grandmother Lois, and in his mother Eunice.⁴ From his infancy he had known the sacred writings, and now he had believed in Christ.⁵ We do not know the time and circumstances of his conversion, but it was likely in the interval between the first and second visits of Paul to Lystra. He had been for some time a Christian, sufficiently long to be well known to the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. His character and conduct had won their approval. Paul, finding his own good opinion of Timothy confirmed by the

¹ Acts xv. 41.² 1 Thess. ii. 14, 16.³ Acts xviii. 2.⁴ 2 Tim. i. 5.⁵ Ibid. iii. 15.

report of the brethren, resolved to take Timothy with him. But he first "took and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those parts, because they all knew that his father was a Greek."¹ Looking to the case of Titus, and Paul's firm refusal to have him circumcised,² we may conclude that, had Timothy been of full Gentile descent, he also would not have been circumcised. Being, however, the son of a Jewess and a Greek, he would have been regarded as of illegitimate descent by all Jews if he had not been circumcised. "Paul was unwilling that the reproach of being a bastard should rest on Timotheus, and Timotheus was probably himself quite willing to submit to the rite."³ Paul was firm as a rock in the case of Titus ; he was the first to yield in the case of Timothy. The one case involved a principle, and the other did not. If by concession Paul could, without a breach of principle, make a prejudice harmless, he would unhesitatingly make the concession as he did here. He gained by this concession a most faithful helper and colleague, one who was to him as a son when he began to reckon himself "Paul the aged." His work being done at Lystra, he and his company went "on their way through the cities." Thus vaguely does Luke describe his further progress. He makes no remark about the work of Paul in these cities, nor does he say in what condition he found the Churches. All he tells us is, that "they delivered them the decrees for to keep, which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily."⁴

So far Paul is on ground traversed by him before. It was work comparatively easy, and no doubt very pleasant to him. But his spirit burned within him to find new ground, and to visit places where Christ had not been preached. We are briefly told that he visited the region of Phrygia and Galatia. This is one of those places in the Acts of the Apostles where we ardently wish for fuller information. For it must have been a fruitful journey—one, too, filled with incidents and events long remembered by Paul. We do not, indeed, know what towns in Phrygia he visited, nor whether he founded any Churches in it. But we do know of towns in South-Western Phrygia in which there were Churches at an early date. These were Colossæ,

¹ Acts xvi. 3.

² Gal. ii. 3.

³ Ewald, "History of Israel," vol. vii. p. 305.

⁴ Acts xvi. 4, 5.

Laodicea, and Hierapolis. It is highly probable that these Churches were founded by Paul's disciples. He himself had never been at any of these places, unless, indeed, he visited them in the interval between his first and second imprisonments at Rome. It does not seem likely that the route he took would lead him near to these cities. He would follow the line of the Roman roads, travelling from Derbe to Iconium, thence to Antioch in Pisidia, and across the central region of Phrygia into Galatia. It is not necessary for us to enter into the discussion regarding these provinces, nor to inquire as to whether Phrygia means the province named so before the Roman occupation, or whether it was the Roman province as politically settled by the Roman government. A full and learned and most important discussion will be found in Bishop Lightfoot's Commentaries on the Epistles to the Galatians and Colossians. Whether the gospel reached these cities as a result of this journey, or as a result of Paul's prolonged visit to and work in Ephesus, we cannot say. But we do know that Colossæ, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were Churches on which the Apostle bestowed most ample care, and that he regarded them with much affection.

Turning to the other province, Galatia, we have some fuller information with regard to it. To us, in this country, it is of great interest to mark the character, demeanour, and attitude of the Galatians. For they are of nearer kin to us than are the Syrians, Asians, Greeks, and Romans to whom Paul wrote his other Epistles. It is likely that they were Celtic, not Teutonic, but in either case they are of Western origin, with the virile power, the passionate energy, and healthy vigour of the younger races of mankind. The Galatians have the vivacity, the impulsiveness, the versatility, the changes of mood, the passionate intensity, which have always been characteristic of the Celtic race. We shall not here tell the story of their wanderings, nor of how they came to dwell in this part of Asia Minor. But when Paul came among them they had for many years been settled there. They had been called in, during the third century B.C., to the help of the King of Bithynia, and were rewarded by a grant of territory, on which they still resided in the time of Paul. They were numerous enough to outnumber the inhabitants of other races, and to give their name to the country. They had no doubt learnt much

the inhabitants of the land, and fallen in with many habits and customs of those around them. But they still remained essentially the same people, with all their ancestral characteristics unchanged. They had learned to speak Greek, for Paul was able to speak to them without an interpreter. They were still heathen. "At that time not knowing God, ye were in bondage to them which by nature are no gods."¹ Paul clearly recognises that he and they are of different races. He is a Jew, and they are Gentiles. When he has to find fault with them, he does not accuse them of falling back into the heathenism from which they had been delivered; on the contrary, it was into Judaism that they had lapsed. In contrast, however, with the gospel of Christ, Paul tells them that Judaism and heathenism stand on the same level. Both hold their votaries "in bondage under the rudiments of the world."² The gospel had brought them liberty; let them stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free.

Considering the importance of the subject and the vast literature to which it has given rise, we may notice the lapse of the Galatians into Judaism more at length. We shall first, however, speak of the welcome Paul had received from them, and of the affection which they had borne to him. He reminds them of how he had come to them, and in what a state of weakness he was then. He was suffering from a sharp attack of some painful sickness, perhaps some form of inflammation of the eyes, a kind of trouble which made him helpless, and caused him much pain. It may have been caused by the fatigue and exposure of his travels. But the pain and disease of the Apostle were the occasion of blessing to the Galatians. They detained him among them, and during the detention he preached the gospel. "Ye know that because of an infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel unto you the first time."³ There was something in the Apostle's appearance which might have given occasion to the Galatians to despise him, or to shun his presence. Even when he was in good health his adversaries could say with apparent truth, "His bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."⁴ This the Galatians had not felt, nor did they allow the offensiveness and repulsiveness of the illness which tortured him to have any effect on their

¹ Gal. iv. 8.² Ibid. iv. 3.³ Ibid. iv. 13.⁴ 2 Cor. x. 10.

minds. On the contrary, his weakness and infirmity aroused their admiration, for they saw, in the manner in which he bore and overcame them, an illustration of the conquering power of the Cross of Christ, a practical manifestation of the strengthening influence of the religion which Paul preached and professed. The inward power and spiritual strength of Paul so shone through the weakness and infirmity of his body, that the Galatians received him "as an angel of God."¹ Nay, they received the weak and tortured servant of Christ as if he had been Christ Himself. Surely never was a stronger testimony borne to the might of personal influence, or to the ascendancy which a man's spirit may have, not only over his own bodily organism, but also over the spirits of other people.

The Galatians showed their respect and affection in a characteristic way. They counted themselves blessed in hearing the Apostle. They congratulated themselves on the fact that he was with them, and on the teaching he gave them. What could they do to show their blessedness and their thankfulness? It was not enough to minister to his necessities in all practicable and possible ways. They sought to show their love in ways which were not possible. It found out a hyperbolic way of expressing itself. The special form of the Apostle's trouble led to the special form which their measureless affection would have taken "I bear you witness that, if possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me."² There was personal attachment to the Apostle, and there was reverence for him as an Ambassador of Christ. They saw Christ in him, and hence the tumult of their blessedness and the fervour of their gratitude. They believed on Christ, and they had received the Holy Ghost. Nor had they been less conspicuous in manifesting the fruits of the Spirit in a new Christian life. They did run well. They were mindful of those through whom these spiritual blessings had come to them. Among them first Christian liberality assumed that systematic, organized form which has been from that day to this the type and sample of all true Christian liberality.

But the Apostle, joyous as he must have been among a people of such warm affection, devoted loyalty, and earnest Christian life, could make no long stay with them. He had to pass into other lands, to preach the gospel to other cities. A few years

¹ Gal. iv. 14.

² Ibid. iv. 15.

passed and he was once more among them. "He went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, stablishing all the disciples."¹ The phrase "in order" implies that Paul left none of the Galatian Churches unvisited. In this visit he had to use great plainness of speech, and to warn them against many errors and sins. He had to forewarn them against those works of the flesh to which they were specially liable, and to tell them plainly "that they which practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."² The memory of this visit was pleasant neither to the Apostle nor to the Galatians. Severity and plainness of speech on his part were met by coldness and apparent resentment on their part, and the way was open for the working of the insidious leaven of Judaism.

Whether the attack came from those who followed in the wake of the Apostle, and dogged his steps with remarkable tenacity, or whether it came from the Jews, who already dwelt in Galatia, does not appear. Nor is it of consequence for us to determine this. Paul evidently does not know who the adversary was. For he exclaims, "O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you?"³ An exclamation which shows his ignorance of the cause, and also his astonishment at the suddenness of the change which had passed over the Galatians. The arguments which were used by the Judaizers are those which Paul eagerly refutes, and are such as readily enough occur to, and are put forward by, Judaizers in every age of the history of the Church. *Mutatis mutandis*, we are quite familiar with them even in our day. Some of these arguments were personal to Paul, and some were drawn from considerations which went to prove the permanence of the Mosaic dispensation. Those that were personal went to disparage his claim to the Apostleship, to show his inferiority to the other Apostles, and to these he answers that he was truly an Apostle, "not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father;"⁴ that he was not taught the Gospel by man, "but through revelation of Jesus Christ,"⁵ and was not dependent on the other Apostles; and, in the last place, he had resisted Peter to the face because he was to be blamed.⁶ The doctrinal arguments of the Judaizers were to the following effect: that the law was Divine, and could not be neglected, that the promises belonged to the

¹ Acts xviii. 23.

⁴ Ibid. i. 1.

² Gal. v. 21.

⁵ Ibid. i. 12.

³ Ibid. iii. 1.

⁶ Ibid. ii. 11.

Jews, that the original Apostles and the Church at Jerusalem received and obeyed the law.

The manner in which Paul deals with all these points is worthy of the highest admiration and of the deepest study. He begins with a personal appeal, and plants his foot on their own experience. They had received the Spirit. How? They had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith. If, therefore, they have received Christ, and have obtained the blessedness of salvation, why should they think of any other way of salvation? Did those who had bewitched them tell them that they could not obtain salvation unless they became the children of Abraham? How did Abraham himself obtain salvation? It was not by works, but by faith that he was saved, and Abraham's seed will be saved as he was saved. Who, then, are the seed of Abraham? They are his spiritual kinsmen: "they which be of faith, the same are sons of Abraham."¹ What faith does, works could never do; and law itself pronounces a curse on all who fail to obey it out and out. But Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. Further, the history of the Old Testament shows that the promise was made to Abraham a long time before the giving of the law, and the law when it came could not disannul it. What, then, was the use of the law? Why was it given at all? "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise had been made."² The law was for the purpose of training, it was work which was preparatory, and ceased when Christ came; and he adds the allegory by which he shows that the slave must be cast out, and that the free alone has the right to the Father's house; and he is the free man who has the faith that worketh by love.

Such is a brief outline of this remarkable vindication of the freedom of a Christian man. But, in order to obtain a full impression of the greatness of the Epistle, one would need to give many days and nights to its study. We ought to let ourselves feel the mighty tide of emotion and the deep conflict of feeling which manifest themselves throughout the Epistle. The wounded feelings of a father; the agitation of an Apostle to whom the awful thought was presented that he had run without being sent; the alarm caused by the peril into which the Churches were brought by this insidious attack; the pain

¹ Gal. iii. 7.

² Ibid. iii. 19.

caused by the coldness of those who had once lavished measureless kindness on him ; and above all, the horror of the dishonour done to the Crucified One by this new gospel, combine to give a vivid personal interest to this unique letter. Nor can we forbear to notice the vehemence of the concluding words : “ From henceforth let no one trouble me : for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus.” ¹ This was a sufficient reason why his Galatian converts should not trouble him again. He had enough to bear. He was branded with the marks of Jesus ; all those scars and signs of suffering undergone for the sake of Jesus, which marked him out from other men as the servant of Christ. It would have been full of interest to have the means of tracing the effect of this Epistle on the Galatian mind. Did it bring them back to the fervour of their first love ? No answer can be given ; but this we know, that this letter, so full of the agitations of personal feeling, has in the course of ages roused in many the fervour of a first love, and has brought many who had begun to fall into legalism back into the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free.

¹ Gal. vi. 17.

CHAPTER VII.

AT PHILIPPI.

The gospel preached in Europe—The Apostle and his company arrive at Philippi—Luke—A Roman colony—At the place of prayer—Conversion of Lydia—Residence in her house—The maid with a spirit of divination—Her cure—Her owners assault the Apostle—St. Paul before the magistrates—His cruel treatment in the prison—Conversion of the jailer—Results of St. Paul's work at Philippi—The Philippian Church—The Epistle to the Philippians.

WESTWARDS from the district of Galatia, Paul and his company went. They were "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia."¹ Their path was directed from on high. They were prevented from entering Bithynia. "They assayed to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not." Thus constrained they went onwards and came to Troas. The goal of his journey was not in Asia, but in Europe; and the Divine will was made manifest to Paul, both in the way of prohibiting him from going to Proconsular Asia or to Bithynia, and in the way of beckoning him onwards to Europe. There appeared to him a vision, which we had better tell in the simple words of Scripture: "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us."² This vision he at once accepted as an intimation of the mind of Christ. He felt that all hesitation was at an end. For the man seen in the vision—the cry of the European world to Paul—was urgent. He was in an attitude of earnestness, his words were words of

¹ Acts xvi. 6.

² Ibid. xvi. 9.

passionate entreaty, and the effect of the whole description is very vivid. When the others were told of the vision, straightway, says Luke, "we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."¹

Silas and Timotheus had accompanied him from Galatia to Troas, and it is likely that at Troas Luke joined the company. We may not affirm that Luke had been residing at Troas, and was in practice as a physician, though it is very likely he was. At all events he now becomes one of the companions of Paul. We can easily imagine how gladly Paul received him, how much he valued his friendship, and how greatly he prized both his sympathy and his skill. The title he elsewhere gives him, "Luke, the beloved physician,"² reveals to us the way in which Paul was wont to think of him. Paul leaned on his friendship, and depended on his skill. How faithful to his trust, and how prolonged his service to the Apostle, the pages of the New Testament abundantly testify. What all the Churches owe to him for his care of Paul, is only second to what they owe to him as the writer of the Third Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles.

The company of four set sail from Troas, made a straight course to Samothrace, and thence to Neapolis, the seaport of Philippi, thence to "Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a Roman colony."³ Philippi had long been famous for the gold mines in its neighbourhood. At the time of Paul's visit it was held directly by the Romans. A colony had been established there by Augustus. Both the civil magistrates and the military authorities were Romans. It was a colony. In the Roman meaning of the word, a colony was a body of people sent out by authority to inhabit a certain city or district, as a protection against possible inroads of an enemy. They served also as a check on the rapacity of provincial governors. They retained the privileges of citizens of Rome, their names continued on the rolls of the tribes, and their magistrates were appointed by Rome, and were responsible directly to Rome. No provincial governor could meddle with them. This description of Philippi is another illustration of the supreme historical accuracy of the Acts of the Apostles.

Philippi was thus rather a Roman than a Greek city. There were not many Jews within its walls, nor were they welcome

¹ Acts xvi. 10.

² Col. iv. 14.

³ Acts xvi. 11, 12.

when they did come. It was enough to cause a prejudice against a man to call him a Jew.¹ Apparently there was no synagogue. After a few days' residence in the city, Paul and his company sought the place where prayer was wont to be made. They knew the Jewish custom of having their place of prayer by the river side, because of the number and frequency of their ceremonial washings. "On the Sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and spake unto the women which were come together."² They sat down as was the custom with Jewish teachers. There is nothing implied as to the character or number of the people who assembled in the place of prayer. It describes those who had come together on that occasion. They spoke to those women, some of whom were Jews, and some were proselytes. According to his manner Luke hastens to speak of some one among the audience who was impressed by what was said. It was natural that he should so speak, for the conversion of Lydia gave to them a home for the new Church, and a place for further advance. She was a woman in good circumstances. Lydia may have been her own name, or the name by which she was known in Philippi, as she was from the Lydian town of Thyatira. She brought from Thyatira the purple which she sold in Philippi. May we not see in the fact that she came from Thyatira a possible way by which the gospel may have found an entrance into Thyatira and the churches of the Lycus? What more natural than that those who brought her the wares from Thyatira, being impressed with her walk and conversation, and having learned the gospel from her, carried it back with them to their home? Such events have often occurred, and those who have gone out with earthly wares have brought back with them the riches of heaven.

Lydia gave heed to the things which were spoken by Paul. She felt the power of the truth; the Lord opened her heart, and she was baptized and her household;³ the first convert made by Paul in his European mission. She urgently besought them to abide in her house. The form of her request is remarkable: "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us."⁴ Why should

¹ Acts xvi. 20.

³ Ibid. xvi. 15.

² Ibid. xvi. 13.

⁴ Ibid. xvi. 15.

the appeal be so urgent, and so much constraint be needed? Because it was an unusual thing. There might be hesitation on the part of Silas and Timothy as to whether they ought to live in the home of one who did not belong to the house of Israel. But if there were hesitation, it was short-lived. Paul yielded to her urgent wishes, and from that time showed that it was right and lawful for Jewish Christians to live with Gentile Christians, and with them to enter into the heritage of freedom bequeathed to them by their Lord. There was soon gathered together a number of people, and the Philippian Church became an actual historical fact.

We have no statement regarding the length of time they spent in Philippi, nor any account of the quiet work which went on from day to day in the place where prayer was wont to be made, and in the house of Lydia. Luke hastens on to describe a striking incident which brought their work in Philippi to an abrupt and startling conclusion. No better illustration could we have of Luke's method than we have here. His aim is to give the origin, not the history of any particular Church. He states any striking incident which took place while any one Church was being founded, and he passes on to do the same service in connection with some other Church. The Apostle and his friends evidently continued to go to the place in which their Philippian work began. Luke speaks of their going to the place of prayer, and of going there "for many days." As they went they were annoyed and troubled by a woman, who is described as having a "spirit of divination."¹ "Having a spirit, a Python." Those who practised ventriloquism were named Pythons. It is more likely, however, that as the woman laid claim to the power of foretelling, she may be said to have had a Python with reference to Apollo, the heathen god of prophecy. Her masters had made use of her gift, whatever it was, traded on it, and made great gain by her soothsaying. She had been strangely excited by what she had seen and heard of Paul and his company. She must have heard something of them and their teaching. Perhaps she desired to be made one of their company, and to enter into their service. Be the reason what it may, she took up a position on the Sabbath day, on the way to the place of prayer, and, following after Paul and his companions, cried out, "These men are servants of the Most High

¹ Acts xvi. 16.

God, which proclaim unto you the way of salvation." What she cried was true. But were they to receive such help as she would give them, their message and their position would be compromised. As his Master had done when He rebuked the unclean spirit,¹ so Paul does now, even though the woman was testifying that he and his companions were servants of the Most High God. Paul was profoundly moved and greatly disturbed. "Being sore troubled, turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."² And the woman found that the power she had had departed from her. She had in her ignorance approached near to high and holy things, and from them a power had gone forth which constrained and overcame the power which had possessed her. From that hour she was as other women.

But this soon spread abroad and caused great uproar among the people. There were many people interested in the woman's strange power. There were first of all her masters, who had made gain of her supposed prophetic gift. There were those who had consulted her before and desired to consult her again ; and there were those who desired to have near at hand a means by which they might know what the future had in store. Prompt action was taken by the masters of the women. They at once laid hold on Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place before the rulers. And the multitude eagerly helped them. It was the first experience that Paul had of purely Gentile opposition. He would know a great deal more of it by and bye. The perils he met before had been caused by the Jews. But the Jews, to do them justice, were inspired in their opposition to Paul by nobler motives than the love of gain. They were at least disinterested ; theirs was a purely religious zeal, not according to knowledge, but still not in itself to be condemned. But this outburst of anger at Philippi, like the subsequent one at Ephesus,³ has nothing noble, generous, or disinterested in it. Their motive in both cases was sheer greed, and their anger arose because the hope of their gain was gone. If Paul had got for the moment out of the reach of the bitterness which springs from religious zeal, he had also come within the range of the violence which springs from frustrated greed ; and the latter is baser than the former.

Paul and Silas were hurried into the presence of the magis-

¹ Mark i. 25.

² Acts xvi. 18.

³ Ibid. xix.

trates, or Prætors. The accusation preferred against them is put into general terms, and there is no mention of the particular cause of the tumult. The charge runs thus: "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive or to observe, being Romans."¹ Not a word about the loss of gain. Their accusers set themselves first to arouse the Roman aversion against the Jews, and then charged them with an attempt to corrupt Roman manners, and in other ways to trouble the city exceedingly. The multitude, in an intense state of excitement, rose up together against Paul and Silas; the magistrates were so intimidated, that they lost all appearance of judicial calm; rashly and violently they laid hands on them, and without attempt at trial, "rent their garments off them, and commanded to beat them with rods."² It was foolishly and cruelly done. To be beaten with rods by a Roman lictor was a cruel and a painful thing. They were beaten on the naked body till the blood came. Then they were sent to prison, and the jailer received a charge to keep them safely. He, with the rough Roman fidelity which looked always to the keeping of his trust inviolate at whatever cost to other people, thrust them into the inner prison, a dark, unventilated place, and probably, as such places often were, foul and loathsome. Not content with this precaution, he, in addition, made their feet fast in the stocks. Thus they were left to pass the night. Their bodies beaten black and blue, their wounds open and sore, kept by the stocks in a constrained attitude which would have prevented them from obtaining rest, even if they had been in perfect health and strength. Thus in a few brief hours Paul and Silas are hurried away from their friends, beaten and tortured, shut up in prison, and left alone to pass the hours in pain and darkness. We do not think it was more painful to them within the prison than it was for Timothy, and Luke, and Lydia, and the other friends outside the prison-house. For the hearts of the latter were wrung with anguish, and with the bitter agony of being compelled to witness the torture and suffering of their loved and venerated leader without being able to help him. We may be sure that with sad hearts they kept their sleepless vigil through the night, and often did their cry ascend to God on behalf of His servants.

¹ Acts xvi. 20, 21.² Ibid. xvi. 21.

As for Paul and Silas, they spent the night in a triumphant way. They were able to disregard the pain and anguish caused by wounds. They rose in triumph over them. They passed the night, not in moans and groans, but in devotion. And God's song was theirs in the night.

“ Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.”

God was with His servants in the prison-house, and He comforted and refreshed them. So that “about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening unto them.”¹ Not hearkening merely, but listening with the most intense eagerness, with an intentness born of surprise both at the unusual nature of the occurrence and at the strange words of hope and peace used by Paul and Silas. Surely such sounds were never heard in a prison-house at the midnight hour before ! But a prison rarely held such prisoners as they were. It is a striking practical comment on the words St. Paul in later days wrote to the Philippian Church : “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content.”² In this conflict, as in others of a similar kind, “he was more than conqueror through Him that loved him.”³

Suddenly a great earthquake was felt : the foundations of the prison-house were shaken ; the doors were flung open ; and the fetters which bound the prisoners, hand and foot, were loosed. As in a former instance the place was shaken wherein the Apostles were gathered together, so it happened again.⁴ God was not forgetful of His servants, nor unmindful of their need. To Paul and Silas it was the sign and token of the Divine presence ; what it was to the other prisoners we may imagine. It filled them with amazement and awe. But to the jailer it was as if the end of all things had come. He was roused out of sleep by the shock. He saw the prison doors open. He thought the prisoners had escaped, as they might have done easily enough in the confusion, but they had quietly stayed where they were. It is both true to the fact and appropriate to the situation that the first thought of the Roman official was with regard to those for whose safe custody he was responsible. A Roman soldier, as this man had been in former days, was

¹ Acts xvi. 25.

³ Rom. viii. 37.

² Phil. iv. 11.

⁴ Acts iv. 31.

trained to absolute fidelity. He must never be untrue to his trust. But he thought he had somehow been unfaithful, and he could not survive the disgrace. He drew his sword, and was about to kill himself. This also is characteristic of the Roman soldier of the period. He could not see the prisoners from the place where he was, but apparently they could see him as he was looking into the darkened rooms, and they were looking out from them. Paul, having heard the sound made by the drawing of the sword, and perhaps having seen the flash of the weapon, instantly cried with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here."¹ The jailer called for lights, and sprang in, and, being terror-stricken, he fell down before Paul and Silas. The presence of Paul and Silas in the prison, and the fact that they had not fled when the doors were open, impressed him strangely. He also connected their imprisonment with the events which had taken place. The feeling came over him that these were men of no common kind, and his attitude in their presence became one of fear and supplication. His self-possession was quite destroyed, and the old foundations on which his belief and confidence had rested were now gone, and, both fearing and hoping, he hardly knew what, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"² His prisoners have suddenly become to him people of acknowledged superiority, and he speaks to them in tones of great respect and reverence. The form of his petition may have been determined by his having heard of the saying of the possessed woman, or by what he had heard of Paul and Silas and their work during the preceding weeks. He had heard of salvation, and the events of the night constrained him to ask for salvation.

The answer came at once, prompt and clear, "Believe on the Lord Jesus,³ and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house."⁴ This is the outline of the teaching, which was filled up throughout the night. For this was not all that Paul spoke that night. He told the jailer and his house who the Lord Jesus was, what He had done, in some such manner as he had taught the Corinthians.⁵ All we are told is that they spake the word of the Lord unto him and all that were in his house.

¹ Acts xvi. 28.

² Ibid. xvi. 30.

³ The Revised Version, in accordance with the evidence of the oldest authorities, omits the word Christ.

⁴ Acts xvi. 31.

⁵ 1 Cor. xi. 1-7.

But they spake in such a way that he believed ; he was persuaded that the Lord Jesus was a real person, one who could help and save and bless him. The messengers of such a Saviour must, he felt, be treated by him with all respect and kindness. With all haste he sought to undo what he had formerly done. He washed their stripes, and set meat before them. He had not thought of their pain when he had thrust them into the inner prison ; now he bound up their wounds, and treated them with tender care. He overflows with kindness, and his heart is filled with unspeakable joy. He and his house are baptized, the second household in Philippi of which this is recorded. Thus ended the story of that day and night, a story full of picturesque and typical details. It is a striking testimony to the power of the gospel. Looking to what is told us of the work at Philippi, we see how well it illustrates the universality of the message Paul had to deliver. The heart of Lydia was quietly opened to receive the gospel ; the girl possessed by a spirit of divination is compelled to show forth the greater power of the Spirit of Christ ; and the Roman jailer, his Roman pride and self-possession flung to the ground, owns the supremacy of a greater Lord than Cæsar. In this first European mission we have trophies of the power of the gospel in the person of Lydia from Asia, in the person of this Greek girl, and in the person of this Roman soldier, a type and prophecy (is it not?) of what this European mission is to grow to.

The magistrates also had their reflections through the night, but of a less happy sort than fell to the lot of the jailer and his prisoners. They waited till it was day, and they could wait no longer. That they sent the sergeants as soon as it was day shows how uneasily they had passed the night. They must have been conscious of having failed in the discharge of their duty. Ministers of justice, they had done injustice, not merely suffered it to be done. Now with the morning light they send the lictors—the men who had beaten Paul and Silas with rods—to convey to the jailer the command, “ Let those men go.”¹ The jailer bears the message to Paul and Silas, and invites them to come forth and go in peace. But Paul was in no mood to go at the magistrates’ bidding. Not that he ever cared to stand on his right, or that he was in the habit of complaining loudly when he was wronged. He had gone without remark when the people

¹ Acts xvi. 35.

of Lystra had risen against him. That, however, was the act of a people roused to passion, and the men in authority had taken no part in it. But this deed was done by men in authority, and it was well that they should be taught the responsibility attached to their office. Besides, Paul had also in view the interests of the Church at Philippi. It might save them much sorrow and suffering in the future if the magistrates were taught a lesson. So for these and other reasons Paul said, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men that are Romans, and have cast us into prison; and do they now cast us out privily? Nay verily; but let them come themselves and bring us out."¹ He lays stress on the particular instances of injustice they had received. They were beaten as those are who are tied to public whipping-posts; they got no trial, for the magistrates had listened to the accusations, but gave them no opportunity of defence; the accusers had raised a prejudice against them by calling them Jews, so Paul places alongside of that the words, "men that are Romans." It was a grave charge to be brought against Roman magistrates. The sergeants left the prison, and reported the words of Paul to the magistrates, who were filled with fear when they heard that they were Romans. For every Roman citizen had the right of appeal to the Emperor, and injustice done to a Roman was strictly inquired into and visited with severe punishment. Their sin had found them out, and they submitted to the humiliating conditions dictated by Paul. "They came and besought them; and when they had brought them out, they asked them to go away from the city."² They were glad to get rid of them on any terms. It does not appear that Paul and Silas departed at once. Perhaps they waited until they were fit to travel. At all events they did not depart until they had seen the brethren. They went to the house of Lydia, not to receive comfort, but to give it. What the comfort was may be gathered from the Epistle he afterwards wrote to this Church. The greatest comfort of all was that he appears to have left Luke with them. For at this point the narrative no longer uses the first person; it speaks of Paul and Silas. What more likely than the inference that Paul, thus suddenly called away, left Luke behind to carry on the work, and build up the Church, until he should be free to rejoin Paul at some other place? Be this as it may, it is evident that the parting between Paul and the brethren must have been most pathetic.

¹ Acts xvi. 37.² Ibid. xvi. 39.

We may at this point look more narrowly at the Epistle he sent to them from Rome, while he himself was languishing in captivity. Our aim is not to expound the doctrine of the Epistle ; it is something much more simple—to glean from the allusions in the Epistle what may serve to throw light on his work at Philippi, and on the conditions under which it was carried on by him. One thing is very evident, that the Philippian Church lay very near his heart, and he rejoiced over them with great joy. To them he wrote no reproving word. They gave him no cause for sorrow. So great was his affection for them, and confidence in them, that he made an exception in their favour. “When I departed from Macedonia no Church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but ye only ; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need.”¹ He knew that this action of his would not be misunderstood by them as it might have been by some other Churches. He would not be suspected by them of making again of his Apostolic calling. Thus he writes to the Corinthians : “I robbed other Churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you ; and when I was present with you, and was in want, I was not a burden on any man ; for the brethren, when they came from Macedonia, supplied the measure of my want ; and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.”² The contrast is great, and continued to be great. To the one Church he says that he will keep himself from being burdensome ; to the other he writes from Rome, gratefully acknowledging the things which came from Philippi, and he sees in the gifts “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.”³

This giving and receiving is but the outward expression of the affection and confidence which subsisted between the Apostle and the Philippian Church. They had begun early to manifest their love and care for him, even as he says “in the beginning of the Gospel.” Ten years or so afterwards he has a lively recollection of their gifts, and of the spirit prompting them. In sore distress he had left them, and their hearts had gone forth after him. He had suffered much, and had been shamefully entreated at Philippi,⁴ but not at the hands of the Church. He has a vivid recollection of them all, and of

¹ Phil. iv. 15, 16.

² 2 Cor. xi. 8, 9.

³ Phil. iv. 18.

⁴ 1 Thess. ii. 2.

many individuals among them. He mentions Euodia and Syntyche, women who had likely been helpful to him when he ministered at Philippi. We do not think it necessary to discuss the fanciful allegorizing of their names, nor to inquire whether they were two neighbouring congregations, one of Jewish and the other of Gentile tendencies. Who they were we do not know, but that they were individual women, who had not at all times been of the same mind, admits of no doubt. It is likely, too, that their houses had been places where the Philippian Christians often met, as was the case with the house of Lydia. He exhorts them that they should be of the same mind in the Lord.¹ They had laboured with him in the Lord, and it pains him that there should be between them any shadow of disagreement. In order to reconcile them he puts forth all his efforts, calls in the help of one whom he addresses as "true yoke-fellow,"² and also the help of Clement, and the rest of his fellow-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life. Who the true yoke-fellow is we do not know, whether we think with Bishop Lightfoot³ that he was most probably Epaphroditus, or with Weizsäcker,⁴ that he was a person whose name was Synzygos. The important thing to observe is the close relation which subsisted between Paul and the Philippians, and the vivid recollection he had of individual members of that Church.

As he himself had suffered in Philippi, so, he reminds them, had they. "To you it hath been granted, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but to suffer in His behalf; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me."⁵ They had suffered, and they had overcome their adversaries notwithstanding. He is persuaded that the good work begun in them will be made perfect. He is sure that their forbearance will be known of all men. It is to this Church that he wrote the great sentence, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."⁶ In truth, as Paul thinks of the past, of his own work among them when the Church was founded, of their

¹ Phil. iv. 2.² Ibid. iv. 3.³ Lightfoot on Phil., p. 156.⁴ Weizsäcker, "Das Apostolische Zeitalter," p. 247.⁵ Phil. i. 29, 30.⁶ Ibid. iv. 8.

enduring affection for him, and liberality to him, of their patient continuance in well-doing, of their heroic endurance, and of their steadfast hope, his heart overflows, and again and again he utters a note of exultant joy. He rejoices, and he calls on them to rejoice.

The picture is not without its shadows. If these were altogether absent it would not be an Epistle suited to a militant Church in this sinful and imperfect world. There are still some tendencies against which they must be warned, and many causes of sorrow to him and them. Paul himself feels that the spirit of faction is still abroad, though not so virulent as the spirit he had to contend with at Corinth, or in connection with Galatia. Some may preach Christ of faction, yet if Christ is preached Paul will not complain ; rather he will rejoice. But he felt that faction might have, or might win, a place in the Philippian Church, and that divisions might possibly arise. So he exhorts them to be of one mind, doing nothing through faction or vainglory. He may have remembered some tendencies in this direction, which had been held down by his presence and example, but which might arise again in his absence. In order utterly to overcome this tendency he pens that magnificent description of the mind "which was also in Christ Jesus"—one of the greatest passages he ever wrote, and one which has given occasion to some to suggest that this is not one of Paul's Epistles. We may not discuss the question here, and we need not, for the Epistle is rooted too securely in history to admit of any serious discussion of its authorship.

We note also the touching and tender references to Timothy and Epaphroditus, and with these the Epistle seems about to close. But he begins anew with another theme, which may be considered a variation of the former discussion about vainglory and faction. Something may have recalled to his mind the way in which Jews were wont to speak of the Gentiles. He is writing to a Gentile Church, a Church greatly beloved by him ; and to the Jews these Gentiles were not better than dogs. Along with that came anew the feeling that danger might again arise from these Judaizing teachers. There is no trace in this Epistle that these were so active and dangerous as they had been, but there was always the danger that the Philippians and others might put their trust in the flesh. Therefore yet again Paul will set forth the true view, and confirm it from his own

experience. So he tells them to beware of dogs, of evil workers, of the concision. They are mere mutilators of the flesh. The true circumcision is with those "who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."¹ Then he shows how little value he had attached to all that he had once possessed, and which had been his glory and his confidence. Quick and fast came the thronging memories of what he had been, and of the things he counted loss for Christ. Quickly, too, there passed before his mind the aim of his new life, the hope that had sustained him through these years of many toils and of many perils, "that I may gain Christ." He tells them that he is still pressing on, stretching forward, pressing on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ. Let the Philippian Church press on in his footsteps, ever remembering that their citizenship is in heaven. "From whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself."²

Both the light and the shadows, both the congratulations and the warnings contained in the Epistle written in Rome, go back to the time when Paul laboured in Philippi. The historical colour is rich and precise, and takes its tone as much from memory of the past as from present information at the disposal of the Apostle. This short account of the Epistle will not be out of place if it enables us to discern more clearly the conditions of his work at Philippi, and to understand more fully the tenderness, the clinging love that longed for love, the craving for human sympathy, and the generous nobility of soul which caused him to value so highly the grace and goodness, the gifts and attainments, of other people. No other of his Epistles reveals so much of the winning tenderness and personal fascination of the great Apostle.

¹ Phil. iii. 3.

² Ibid. iii. 20, 21.

CHAPTER VIII.

THESSALONICA, BERCEA, ATHENS.

Thessalonica—Among the Jews—Riot in Thessalonica—Assault on Jason—
Epistles to the Thessalonians—In Berœa—In Athens—What St. Paul
said—How he felt—Character of the Athenians—Greek philosophy—
The speech of the Apostle—Contents of the speech—Its abrupt con-
clusion—Results of the speech.

THEY next passed to Thessalonica, a place about one hundred miles south-west of Philippi. They travelled along the great military road which led from Byzantium to the Adriatic coast. It would take them three or four days to accomplish the journey. They passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia. In the *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti* the journey is as follows : From Philippi to Amphipolis, thirty-two miles ; from Amphipolis to Apollonia, thirty-two miles ; from Apollonia to Thessalonica, thirty-six miles.¹ It does not appear that they made any stay in these places ; at least there is no record of it if they did. Luke gives us only one paragraph on the work in Thessalonica. It had been a famous place, and had been noted for a long time for its hot springs, which were highly valued for their medicinal properties. Its former name was Therma, and it was called Thessalonica either after a sister of Alexander the Great, or after a sister or daughter of Cassander, who rebuilt it about the year 315 B.C. It stood at the head of the Thermaic gulf, and was at the time of Paul's visit a most important city, and one of

¹ Quoted in Hackett's "Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles," p. 207.

the centres of trade in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. It has had many vicissitudes in the course of history, but is still an important place with a large Jewish and Christian population.

His arrival at Thessalonica was ever to Paul a memorable event, as well remembered by him as his departure from Philippi. The First Epistle to the Thessalonians is full of allusions to both events. With some exaltation of feeling, notwithstanding the weariness of his protracted journey, he had entered Thessalonica. He began work at once. He made his way to the synagogue. For apparently the Jews were sufficiently numerous to have provided for themselves a building in which to worship. For three successive Sabbaths he reasoned with them. He met them on the common ground of the Old Testament Scriptures familiar to them and to him from their earliest days. With great brevity Luke gives us the sum of his reasoning. Paul undertook to prove from the Scriptures that the Messiah was to be a suffering Messiah ; that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer, to die, and to rise again from the dead.¹ His argument reminds us of the words of the Risen Lord, as recorded in the Gospel according to Luke : "And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."² It was a hard thesis to prove to a Jew, who had fed his imagination with the glowing pictures of the Messiah and Messiah's reign which are in the Old Testament, and ignored all those lines of suffering and humiliation characteristic of the Messiah, as in truth all Jews had ignored them until they were drawn forth and illuminated by the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. The course of Paul's argument seems evident enough. He first expounded the Scriptures, and then he showed that all the lines of prophecy met in Christ ; that Jesus was the kind of Messiah they ought to have expected. So with urgency and authority, with all the strength which springs from assured conviction, Paul affirmed that "this Jesus whom I proclaim unto you is the Christ."³ Jesus had both suffered and died and risen again according to the Scriptures, and Paul witnessed to the truth and reality of the events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

His work among them was not without result. Some of the

¹ Acts xvii. 3.

² Luke xxiv. 27.

³ Acts xvii. 3.

Jews were persuaded, cast in their lot with Paul and Silas, and decided to join their community. A considerable congregation gathered round him, consisting of those who had already been worshippers at the synagogue. The proselytes of the gate, heathen by birth, who had already embraced the Jewish faith, now became believers in Christ. "Of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few."¹ The Jews, however, who did not believe, were filled with envy, and, moved with jealousy, could not bear that the number of their adherents should be so conspicuously lessened. It was provoking to them that so many should leave them, and follow Paul in the new way of faith in Christ. Great magnanimity, and something more than magnanimity, is needed to say of any cause, It must increase, and our cause must decrease. The Jews of Thessalonica were not of that rare order of men. The steps they took betray their consciousness of a losing cause. They gathered to them a number of people described as "certain vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering a crowd, set the city on an uproar."² The people they gathered were the "loafers" in the market-place, who had not strength of character to follow honest, steady industry, and who were always ready to go whither excitement or gain might lead them. At the head of this miserable multitude, the Jews, who had known where to find Paul and Silas, assaulted the house of Jason, with whom the Apostle lived. Not finding them there, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers³ of the city, and accused them of being enemies of the Roman power. The accusation was deftly contrived to secure for the Jews as large a following as possible. "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus."⁴ It was just such a charge as would trouble the people and disturb the rulers. That they were revolutionists, that they were encouraged by Jason, that they were rebels against Cæsar, and followers of a rival king, were heavy charges, and had some plausibility. For no doubt Paul had spoken of Jesus as King, and of His kingdom. The rulers, however, were men of more

¹ Acts xvii. 4.

² Ibid. xvii. 5.

³ The title *politarch* is found in an inscription preserved on an arch which spans a street in Saloniki—another illustration of the supreme historical accuracy of Luke.

⁴ Acts xvii. 6, 7.

strength than were those of Philippi, and acted in a manner more consistent with justice. They made Jason and the rest responsible, and took security from them and let them go. They simply took measures for preserving the public peace, and did nothing further. But the uproar caused by the Jews put an end to Paul's personal work in Thessalonica. The situation had become dangerous, and Paul and Silas departed by night to Berœa.

From this brief account we obtain but a faint conception of the greatness of the work done in Thessalonica, and of the conditions under which the work was done. The converts at Thessalonica to whom Paul wrote, were of Gentile descent, and had been of Gentile belief and habit. For he tells how they "turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God."¹ But their faith was as conspicuous as their idolatry had been. Nor were they either idle or inactive in the Christian life, or in the endeavour to do Christian work. From them "the word of the Lord had sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place their faith to God-ward had gone forth."² This is the more noteworthy when we consider the social position occupied by these converts. They were chiefly Gentile workmen, and earned but scanty wages. This is clear from the following passage. "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God."³ Thus while he gave the sabbath days to the Jews and proselytes who worshipped in the synagogue, his week-days were divided between working at his trade and preaching to the Gentile workmen. Thus the Apostle literally wrought night and day. He would not encroach on the scanty earnings of these working men, but even with all his toil he was not able to earn enough to support himself and his company. For he was glad to accept the help sent him once and again from Philippi. His stay in Thessalonica must have been for a considerable period, for it would take some time for messengers in those days to travel to and fro from Thessalonica to Philippi. Nor have we any note of time in Luke's description of the work in Thessalonica, save what is contained in the "three sabbath days," which really does not determine anything. That the time was somewhat protracted, appears from what he wrote in his

¹ 1 Thess. i. 9.² Ibid. i. 8.³ Ibid. ii. 9.

Second Epistle : "For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us : for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you ; neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labour and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you : not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you, that ye should imitate us." ¹

The tone of the Epistles seems thus to bear traces of the character of the community to which they were addressed. They are addressed to working men by one who had toiled with them, and who knew the severity and sacredness of daily labour. He can enter into the needs and surroundings of those to whom he writes. Every exhortation almost is based on the recognition of the worth of labour. "Be not weary in well-doing." Paul knew also the kind of restlessness which comes over working men, so he exhorts them "that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, as we charged you." ² These Epistles are throughout addressed to men who led a full and busy life, who had no idle time on their hands, but who were in the true sense of the word busy workers. The topics discussed, too, are not doctrinal, but practical and personal. The difficulties he has to remove are not speculative, nor are the dangers against which he forewarns of a speculative kind. They are intensely practical, and such as men, who have little time for reflection, are liable to meet.

His main theme is the coming of the Lord, which he sets forth in varied ways, but always with a practical end in view. We need not, however, analyse the Epistles. Our object has been to ascertain the nature and conditions of his work at Thessalonica, and what particular motives he brought to bear on the Thessalonians. His aim was that they should bring to bear on their Christian life the practical earnestness and business sagacity which they manifested in their common life. Let them serve the living God and wait for His Son from heaven, for they know not how soon their work may be done. It has been urged that these Epistles are insignificant in their contents, and has no special aim. But this remark is itself aimless, and when the Epistle is studied in the light of its occasion and origin, it causes us to wonder more and more at the wisdom, sympathy, and insight which made Paul all things to all men. "In no

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 7-9.

² 1 Thess. iv. 11.

Epistle is the character of Paul more frankly disclosed. His affectionate and ardent disposition, his devotedness to the welfare of his fellow-men, his generous recognition of the beginnings of good in his converts, his solicitude for their progress, his purity of motive, and untiring energy are clearly reflected in this letter. He felt for his converts all the love and responsibility of a parent. It was with pain he absented himself from them, with difficulty he was prevented from revisiting them, with delight that he looked forward to the time when this should be possible. A great nature absorbed in great aims shines through every page of the letter.”¹

From Thessalonica we follow the Apostle in his journey by night to Berœa, which is situated at the southern extremity of Macedonia. Here, too, Paul had to suffer from “unreasonable and evil men,”² but before they followed him from Thessalonica he had had an opportunity of preaching the gospel quietly and undisturbed. As was his custom he began at Berœa by visiting the synagogue. The Jews at Berœa were conspicuous among all their kinsmen for the fair and candid hearing they gave to the message spoken by Paul. They did not refuse him a hearing, nor did they accept all at once his reasoning. Paul had based his message on the Scriptures, but his view was new to them, and they set themselves diligently to examine into the grounds of what he alleged. They are willing to sift the evidence, they are not willing to take anything for granted; an attitude of mind well pleasing to him who wrote the words, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”³ They brought Paul’s teaching to the test of the Scriptures, but they had already received it with all readiness of mind. Their whole bearing and attitude call forth the emphatic approval of Luke, and he sets it down as a “noble” thing for them to have done. They had received the same message, and from the same lips, as they of Thessalonica, but they received it in a different spirit. Nor did they linger long in a merely critical attitude. “Many of them believed; also of the Greek women of honourable estate, and of men, not a few.”⁴ These events, so rapidly described by Luke, must have taken some time.

The Jews of Thessalonica did not know in what direction Paul went when he made his secret flight by night, and they would

¹ Dr. Dods, “Introduction to the New Testament,” p. 158.

² 2 Thess. iii. 2.

³ 1 Thess. v. 20.

⁴ Acts xvii. 12.

not likely know where he was for some time. So Paul could pursue his work quietly and unmolested by these "unreasonable and wicked men." But soon news came to them that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berœa, and it stirred them to action. They came to Berœa, and proceeded forthwith to agitate against Paul. The descriptive words as given in the Revised Version show how eagerly and energetically they set to work, but they also indicate that they needed to put forth energy. "Stirring up and troubling the multitudes."¹ The first word, suggestive of the stormy sea lashed into foam by the winds, indicates both the strength and the violence of the Jews; and the second word tells us of the kind of accusation brought against Paul, the same as was brought against him at Thessalonica. We do not know the end of the agitation. For the brethren, taking thought for the safety of the Apostle, who was so apt not to take care of himself, did not allow his health or life to be risked. "They sent him forth to go as far as to the sea,"² and they sent him forth alone. It was likely that the fury of the persecutors would abate as soon as they discovered the absence of the man against whom their anger was chiefly excited. Silas and Timothy remained in Berœa, as Luke had been left at Philippi.

Those who were sent with Paul not only brought him "as far as to the sea," but they went with him to Athens. It is likely that they went by sea. For many reasons this is most probable. There is no mention of any place visited by him between Berœa and Athens, nor any record of his having preached the gospel at any intermediate station. Nor would they allow the Apostle to undertake an aimless journey by land, with all its terrible fatigue and unnecessary danger, when a short and easy journey by sea would bring him safely to Athens. Those who conducted him found, when they reached the sea, an opportunity of sailing without delay; they seemingly embraced it, and, going along with him, they soon found themselves in the intellectual capital of the world. From Athens they speedily returned, bearing with them a commandment unto Silas and Timothy to hasten their departure and to come with all speed.

Paul at Athens, a typical Israelite, one of the race which embodied the moral consciousness of humanity, and was the

¹ Acts xvii, 13.

² Ibid. xvii, 14.

incarnate conscience of the race, in the city which had been the home of intellect, art, and science ! Here the two main streams of ancient civilisation meet, and only meet ; they do not mingle as yet, nor will they for some time to come. To bring the wisdom, the intellect, the manifold versatility of Greek science and art into the service of the moral and spiritual life which had its home among the Jews, and which had come to full growth and realisation in and through Jesus Christ, was a mighty task, but one which in some measure was accomplished in the course of time. But we must resist the temptation to dilate on the topic of the Jew and the Greek, and their respective places in the providential order of the world. Nor may we dwell on the various influences which were exerted by the one or the other from the time when they were brought into close contact by the victories of Alexander the Great. It would be a fascinating task to describe the growth of a spirit and a literature which sprang into being through the cross-fertilisation of Hebrew and Greek ideas. But we must limit ourselves to the instance before us, and leaving wider issues to a more convenient season, take with us only what is indispensable for the right understanding of the narrative before us.

Paul was all alone at Athens. He had leisure to wander through the city alone. It was a great contrast to Jerusalem. There no statue was to be found, no altar save the altar in the Temple. The Jews had grown to the conviction that images of all sorts were unlawful, and through the stringent teaching of the past had been persuaded that only one altar was to be allowed. But in Athens there were statues at every corner, and altars in every street. As Paul waited, and wandered through the city, his spirit was stirred within him to an intense degree. He was in a "paroxysm." It is the same word which describes the contention between him and Barnabas, but there it is the noun, here it is the verb. It means that the sight of the idols became so great a source of provocation to him that he could not bear it. His spirit was provoked, and the fire within burnt so intensely, that it became a source of even physical uneasiness. He must do something, and what he did was characteristic of the man. It appears that there was a synagogue at Athens, and to it he went at first. He expected that the Jews would be in full sympathy with him in his excitement against idolatry. The Jews and the devout persons

ought to have been with him, and to have felt, as he did, the offence of idolatry. It appears, however, that they did not feel as he did. For the conference he had with them is described as a "dispute," and therefore we must infer that he was unable to stir up the Jews and proselytes, or to raise them to the height of his own excitement. Perhaps custom had deadened their sense of the heinousness of the sin of idolatry; perhaps, too, they felt that they were only a tolerated people in Athens, and had no right to meddle with the customs of the people. It was enough for them that they kept themselves and their synagogue free from the taint. At all events Paul could not rouse them to the pitch of enthusiastic disapproval, nor induce them to take any step, or give him any help in his crusade against idolatry.

He passed from the synagogue to the streets, and daily in the market-place he had earnest conversations with them that he happened to meet. Some centuries earlier Socrates, in a similar way, had stood in the market-place, or walked about the streets of Athens, eagerly laying hold of all who would listen, trying to make them think seriously of truth, and virtue, and righteousness, and to make them know the reality of knowledge and their responsibility with regard to it. Now another than Socrates stands in the market-place of Athens, and with similar eagerness strives to lead the people to higher things: one, however, who has a clearer message and a higher truth than even Socrates knew—a truth which had found him before he had found it. So the eager Apostle enters into conversation with passing members of the idle crowd. He, weighted with the sense of the nearness and of the personality of the living God, burning with the desire of doing good, and with the necessity of redeeming the time, comes into contact with these idle triflers, who had no other aim in life than to pass the time in a graceful, artistic, indolent fashion, and to have their curiosity tickled with the latest news. Surely humanity could afford no greater contrast than that between the earnest, burdened Apostle and the graceful, idle, trifling Athenians "who spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing."¹ It is a graphic description of a frivolous and purposeless life, and there is good ground for believing an accurate account of the Athenian life of the period.

It is not necessary to say much, if anything, about the various

¹ Acts xvii. 21.

schools of Greek philosophy, two of which are mentioned here ; all the more because we may quite well understand the situation and the Apostle's speech without any such disquisition. He does not enter into a discussion of the questions which separated the Stoic from the Epicurean, or the Peripatetic from the Academician. The matters he brings before them lie outside, or rather underlie, all such differences, and touch a broader human interest. As the Stoics and Epicureans are mentioned, we may, however, describe their peculiar tenets in a few sentences. Both systems of philosophy sprang from a desire to find something better and more satisfying to the nature of man than could be found in the religions and mythologies of Greece and Rome. But the better part of their influence had long passed away, and the Epicureans and Stoics of Athens were but degenerate representatives of these systems as they once were. According to Zeno, the founder of the Stoics, to practise virtue was the highest duty of man, but knowledge was needed in order to practise virtue. How, then, shall we obtain sure and certain knowledge? The only knowledge which is sure, certain, immediate, and real, is the knowledge we have through the senses. Thus their theory of knowledge was sensualistic and materialistic. It was also pantheistic, for God was the soul of the universe, from whom all things came, to whom all things return, in cycles which are reproduced in a rhythmic manner, governed by unchanging law. Individuals were of little importance ; there was a providence, but providence cared only for the whole. They were thus materialists, pantheists, fatalists, who constantly strove to maintain always and everywhere undisturbed peace of mind. If they were uncomfortable in this world, they had always the resource of sending themselves out of it. They began with a desire to find a system to guide life and promote moral conduct, they ended with a system which made life a thing to be disposed of at the caprice of him who possessed it.

The Epicureans made pleasure the end of life. By the word pleasure they did not understand what was profligate or really sensual, but that state of body and mind which might be called tranquillity, freedom from disturbance and care. Along with this great practical aim they usually held that there was no real moral government of the world, that there was no Maker of the world, and that the world had come to be by some happy

chance, or by some fortuitous concourse of atoms. Thus the Epicureans pictured for themselves a world made by chance, ruled by no fixed law, cared for by no God, for the gods lived apart, careless of mankind, intent only on maintaining their own happiness. We may readily enough imagine how this system should lend itself to the encouragement and to the production of an idle, careless, pleasure-seeking mode of living, in which the thought of duty found no place.

Certain of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered Paul and began to question him. From their remarks we gather that Paul, though his spirit had been provoked to action by the sight of a city full of idols, had not spoken much against idolatry. He had, on the contrary, set forth the positive aspects of the truth, and had told them of Jesus and the resurrection. So much appears evident from the questions they ask. "Some said, What would this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached Jesus and the resurrection."¹ One set of his critics were offended at the manner of the speaker. He seemed to them a babbler, one who had not the polish of a person trained in the schools at Athens. Where was the studied antithesis, the balanced rhythm to which they were accustomed in Greek orators? Where were the technical terms, the rhetorical illustrations, the ample sweep of analogical argument? There were none of these in the conversational statement of the Apostle. But there were others who were disposed to overlook all outward defects of manner, and who would listen to one who, at all events, spoke with all the appearance of earnest conviction. It was a new thing in the Athens of the time for a man to speak in this fashion. They understood enough to be able to know that Paul had something to say which they had not heard before. Jesus and the resurrection! What did Paul mean by them? Their curiosity was greatly excited. Here was a new sensation. So a public meeting was called, and Paul was brought to the Areopagus, and courteously asked, "May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by thee? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean."² Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and gave utterance to the remarkable speech

¹ Acts xvii. 18.

² Ibid. xvii. 19, 20.

recorded for us by Luke. It is impossible to say whether we have here an outline only of what Paul said, or all that he was allowed to say. On the one hand it is so condensed that it may well be only the heads of his oration, but on the other hand we have the statement that as soon as he began to speak of the resurrection the meeting broke up, and it is not likely that Paul would have spoken for any time without speaking of Jesus and His resurrection. Be this as it may, the speech in itself, as given in the Acts, is of the highest importance. It agrees with what we know to have been a deep-seated belief, and reasoned conviction in the mind of Paul. Usually in his Epistles he is able to take for granted the things he says here ; but once at least he feels constrained to write : "For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity."¹ To speak as he did at Athens was, therefore, quite in keeping both with what he said at Lystra and with what he wrote to Rome. The more oratorical form depends on the audience.

He seeks to find some ground common to him and the Athenians. Having found a point of contact with them, he makes it a point of departure, from whence he might lead them to higher truths. This point he finds in an inscription he had observed on an altar, "To an unknown God."² We may remark in passing that many people in reading this speech at Athens seem to see nothing else in it than this inscription. Sir William Hamilton, in a famous passage which has been often quoted, makes mention of the inscription, as if it were the culmination of all religious philosophy. Apparently he had not observed that Paul makes use of the words, "To an unknown God," for the sake of showing that God could be known. From this sentence as a starting-point Paul goes on to tell the Athenians of God. He is no Epicurean deity, nor is He the soul of the world as the Stoics said. He is the Maker of heaven and earth. He made the world and all things therein. The Greeks had sought after Him, and the inscription on the altar plainly said they had not found Him. Paul had come to set forth to them what they had worshipped in ignorance. He did not accuse them of want of reverence, or of want of diligence ; rather, he had found in them a misdirected reverence, and a belief that had gone beyond the

¹ Rom. i. 20.

² Acts xvii. 23.

facts. But now Paul has come, a man sent from God, to tell them who God is, and what He would have them to do. Having described God as the Maker of the world and all things therein, he tells of the kind of service that man owed to Him. "He, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; neither is He served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He Himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."¹ It will not help Athens that she has some of the most beautiful and most celebrated temples in the world, for the service which the living God requires cannot be rendered by hands alone. Nor must they think of God as if He needed or was dependent on the gifts and sacrifices of men. They must think of Him as the Giver, not as the Receiver. Life, health, all things flow from Him.

Having thus briefly and pregnantly set forth the doctrine of God as Maker of the world, and the service which man may and may not render to Him, he describes God's relation to man in particular. "He made of one"² every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitation." The doctrine of Divine providence was never more clearly or more beautifully expressed, nor the great doctrine of the unity of mankind. The true reading does not lay stress merely on the physical unity of mankind, but on their moral and spiritual oneness. He made them like each other, for He had made them in His own image. He provided for them a home on this bounteous and beautiful earth. He gave them seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, and so ordained these that the earth was a fit home for man, and He appointed for them the boundaries of their habitations. Thus Paul teaches that as there was one God, so also humanity is one. On this foundation he builds the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood a little later. But this, he proceeds to tell them, God has done with a purpose. God made them, gave them a home, provided for them, ruled them in order that they might seek Him. The world was a place in which man might find God. True, man's search after God had been like the efforts of one groping in the dark. "If haply they might feel after Him and find Him."³ Paul does not tell here, what he afterwards told in the Epistle

¹ Acts xvii. 24.

² Acts xvii. 26. All the best MSS. omit "blood."

³ Acts xvii. 27.

to the Romans, the reasons why they did not succeed in finding God. True, they might have found Him. "He is not far from any one of us." "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being." The living God is near to man. He does not dwell in some distant, inaccessible sphere; and of this one of their own poets had a glimpse. Aratus of Cilicia had written, "For we are also His offspring." Here the Apostle finds another point of contact with his auditors, and uses it to enforce his message.

Man is the offspring of God; surely it is absurd to think that the Godhead is like material things! Man is greater than things, how much greater is the Godhead! Men ought not to have such unworthy thoughts of God as they had, but they did have such thoughts, and did think that God was like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art or man's device. God had patience with this ignorance, but now the time has come when "He commanded men that they should all everywhere repent." Repentance is urgent, for the judgment shall come: the day is appointed in which all shall be tried. God's revelation in nature, of which man made so little, and which he had so much misread, is now made perfect by a higher revelation. God has spoken through His Son. God will assuredly bring man into judgment. "He hath given assurance unto all men of the judgment by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead."

Here the speech was abruptly stopped; some mocked, and others thought that they might have another opportunity. But Paul went out from among them, and Athens saw him no more. His visit to Athens was not without result. "Certain men clave unto him, and believed; among whom was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

I do not stay to deal with the doubts which Weizsäcker¹ and others have cast on the historical character of this scene at Athens. We know that Paul was at Athens,² and was alone there. We know also that what is recorded here is quite characteristic of the Apostle, and we can see also that the line of thought and the particular views set forth in the speech were familiar to him. There is a striking agreement between what is set forth here, and his teaching in his Epistles, with regard to God, to worship, to Divine providence, to the judg-

¹ "Das Apostolische Zeitalter," p. 265.

² I Thess. iii. 1.

ment, and to the fact that Christ is Judge of all. There is also striking confirmation in the reference to Dionysius the Areopagite contained in Eusebius. "Beside, the Areopagite called Dionysius, whom Luke has recorded in his Acts, after Paul's address to the Athenians, is mentioned by Dionysius, another of the ancients, and pastor of the church at Corinth, as the first bishop of the Church at Athens." ¹

¹ H. E. iii. 4 ; see also iv. 23.

CHAPTER IX.

IN CORINTH.

Corinth—Character of its people—Aquila and Priscilla—Arrival of Silas and Timothy—Aggressive work—Titus Justus—Crispus—Progress of the work—Opposition of the Jews—They accuse St. Paul—Gallio—His decision—Trustworthiness of the account of Paul's work contained in the Book of Acts—Weizsäcker—The Epistles to the Corinthians—Conditions and character of St. Paul's work among them—Methods and principles by which the Apostle settled questions of doctrine, morals, and ecclesiastical order.

FROM Athens he went to Corinth, the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, and then the most important city of Greece. Its situation gave its inhabitants the command of all traffic between the peninsula and the rest of Greece ; and with its two ports, one on the east, and one on the west, Corinth was in a position to win a large share of the sea-borne traffic. It was a place of high culture, famous also for its connection with the Isthmian games. It had, however, a reputation of a more sinister kind. To "Corinthianize," to live as a Corinthian, meant a life of the most licentious sort. A "Corinthian banquet," a "Corinthian drinker," had passed into proverbs, and become part of current speech. Outward prosperity, combined with utter dissoluteness of life, were the characteristics of the city to which Paul now came.

Following the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles, we read that here Paul "found a certain Jew, Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome." It is not said that Aquila and Priscilla were Christians before

Paul met them. Probably not, as he is called a Jew, not merely by race, but by religion. We may easily conceive how the meeting between Paul and them took place. Paul came as a solitary individual into Corinth, and naturally the first thing for a stranger to do was to find work and lodgings. He sought the place where the tent-makers lived, and found a Jewish family who followed his own trade. What more natural than that the double bond of kinship and common occupation should draw the two men together, both comparative strangers to all in that great city? A third bond was soon to bind them more closely together. Aquila and Priscilla believed in the gospel which Paul preached. Thus at the outset Paul had found a family, work, and a place he could consider a home for the time. But his main work was not forgotten. "He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks."¹ Thus the time, fully occupied, wore away, until Silas and Timothy did arrive.

When they came, Paul, strengthened and refreshed by their presence, took a more aggressive attitude, and his preaching became more incisive. He did not need now to labour so much at his trade, as the contribution from the Philippian Church had made this unnecessary. At all events we note a change. "Paul was constrained by the word."² The word led him on, and his testimony became more urgent and pressing. He could not help himself, and with greater insistence he testified that Jesus was the Christ. Whatsoever had been the substance of his reasoning formerly, now he confines himself to the one topic, and the proofs of it, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah whom the Jews had long expected. But he preached to the Jews in vain. They were resolute in opposition, as if they were entrenched in a strong position from which no effort of his could dislodge them. Nor did they confine themselves to a sullen, dogged resistance; they spoke evil of the truth which St. Paul preached, they "blasphemed." Paul did not persevere in the teeth of such implacable animosity to Jesus and the gospel. He turned away from them, and with the significant gesture of entire renunciation. "He shook out his raiment,"³ to tell them that henceforth they will not be in his thoughts. To them must attach

¹ Acts xviii. 4.² Ibid. xviii. 5.³ Ibid. xviii. 6.

the responsibility of rejecting the gospel. St. Paul was free ; he had done what he could, and from henceforth in Corinth his work will lie among the Gentiles. To the Gentiles he went, and he found a house suitable for teaching and worship, close by the synagogue. It does not appear that St. Paul dwelt in the house. He may have remained with Aquila and Priscilla. The house of Titus Justus became the headquarters of the mission, and for eighteen months Paul taught the word of God among them.

His work among the Jews had not been altogether in vain. All of them had not been obdurate and impenitent. "Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house."¹ He was one of those whom Paul himself baptized.² As soon as he was baptized, Crispus would at once leave the synagogue, and the Jews would speedily choose another ruler. Accordingly we find that a few verses further on Sosthenes is described as the ruler of the synagogue. He may have been successor to Crispus, if there were only one synagogue in Corinth and, as far as the account in the Acts of the Apostles goes, mention is made of only one synagogue. To have one like Crispus who had occupied the high position of ruler of the synagogue, and one like Titus Justus who is briefly described as "one that worshipped God," gave to Paul a vantage-ground from which he could press on to win more people for Christ. The work went bravely on ; nor were there wanting to Paul other signs and tokens of Divine strength and encouragement. Many of the Corinthians had believed and were baptized. This might in other circumstances have been sufficient to have encouraged Paul to persevere. From whatever reason, he must have needed more strength than he could receive from the direct results of his preaching. The vision and the revelation he received were surely needed by him, or they would not have come. "The Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace : for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee : for I have much people in this city."³ He is to speak more urgently than ever, and work on till the Lord had found the people. Paul obeyed, and continued to give his testimony regarding Jesus, until it was made plain to him that he was called to preach the gospel to other cities also.

¹ Acts xviii. 8.² 1 Cor. i. 14.³ Acts xviii. 9-10.

We have no more details of his work in Corinth in the Acts of the Apostles, but we have one illustrative incident. We know not the precise date, nor whether it was early or late in the time of Paul's sojourn at Corinth. The only note of time is that it happened when "Gallio was proconsul of Achaia." Gallio was the brother of the more famous Seneca, who was tutor to the Emperor Nero. Gallio was a man highly esteemed and much loved by his Roman contemporaries, and many pleasant things said of him have been preserved in extant literature—an easy, pleasant, popular man, and a favourite with everybody. The Jews resolved to try that plan in Corinth which had been found successful elsewhere. "They with one accord rose up against Paul, and brought him before the judgment-seat."¹ They had already driven him from Beroëa and from Thessalonica, and now they seek to drive him from Corinth. But theirs was a diminishing success, and at Corinth they failed altogether to effect their purpose. They brought an accusation against Paul. Luke gives only a summary of the accusation, for it is evident, from Gallio's reply, that the Jews had entered into many details. They accused him thus: "This man persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law." The accusation was not so cunning as, though it was more honest, than those usually brought against Paul. He was not accused even of doing anything against Roman law nor of treason against Cæsar. They invoked the power of the proconsul to protect the Jewish law. Gallio listened until they had stated their case; nor did he allow Paul to reply. He feels he does not need to hear the defence. He sees it is not a matter of wrong or of wicked villany; there is here no breach of law or equity. He will not enter into questions about words and names, and if it is merely a question of Jewish law, let them look to it themselves. "I am not minded to be a judge of these matters."² The case was ended, the lictors are commanded to disperse them, and the Jews are driven from the judgment-seat.

The Jews had gained nothing this time by their accusation against Paul. They were plainly told they had no case. But the tone and attitude of the proconsul had an effect which he had not foreseen. The crowd who had gathered round to hear the accusation, and the decision, instantly took action. They

¹ Acts xviii. 12.

² Ibid. xviii. 15.

did not like the Jews, and the present seemed a fit opportunity to gratify their dislike. They, therefore, to mark their disapproval of the action of the Jews in bringing Paul before the judgment-seat, laid rough and violent hands on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, the man who had been the spokesman of the Jews, and beat him before the judgment-seat. This was done even in the presence of the proconsul. But it is added, "Gallio cared for none of these things"; he had no interest in the question they had raised, nor had he much regard to the life and comfort of those whom he regarded as mere Jews. The incident is altogether characteristic of the man, and of the Roman imperious carelessness about the life or comfort of those whom they looked on as inferior races.

This, then, is the account which Luke gives us of the work of Paul at Corinth—an account which a good many critics have looked on as unhistorical and untrustworthy. It would lead us too far afield to enumerate all that has been written on this head. We may, however, look at what has been said, by one of the latest, as he is also one of the most distinguished of these critics. Weizsäcker¹ finds the whole account to be historically untenable. The preaching to the Jews, their rejection of him, and his consequent departure to the Gentiles, are unhistorical; so also is the fact recorded by Luke, that all those who company with Paul are Jews, with the single exception of Titus Justus. This, he says, is utterly opposed to the facts recorded in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The section about Aquila and Priscilla also is untrustworthy, since from 1 Cor. xvi. 19 and Rom. xvi. 3 we find them at Ephesus, in possession of a house, which is large and convenient enough to be the meeting-house of a Church. But the account of them in Acts is neither clear nor consistent. Crispus is rather a difficulty to Weizsäcker's view, but he gets rid of it by saying that from the passage in 1 Cor. i. 11 it is not clear that he was a Jew, and Paul tells us nothing of Titus Justus. In short, Weizsäcker says that the scenes which set forth the accusation of the Jews, and its result, and the indifference of the proconsul, are due to the "pragmatism" of the writer.

Next he tries to show that the statement in the section regarding Aquila and Priscilla is inconsistent with the statement that follows, in so far as in the first section Luke says that Paul

¹ Weizsäcker, "Das Apostolische Zeitalter," pp. 268-272.

“sought to persuade Jews and Greeks,” while in the second section he represents the activity of Paul among the Greeks to have begun after the arrival of Silas and Timothy, and after the rupture with the Jews. These are specimens of the sort of argumentation by which it is sought to disparage this section of the Acts of the Apostles as a source of history. There are others which also may be touched on, but at present let us look at them. The underlying ground of Weizsäcker’s objection is his view that it was unlikely that Paul would preach so much in the synagogue of the Jews. If there were a synagogue of the Jews in Corinth—and no one has ventured to deny that there was—it was in accordance with Paul’s custom that he should begin at the synagogue. It was his invariable custom so to do. He did it when Barnabas was his companion, he did it in Europe, at Philippi, at Thessalonica, and now at Corinth. If there was in Corinth no reference to his usual custom, we should have looked for an explanation of his deviation from his usual practice.

As to the statement that in the Acts of the Apostles all the names of those with whom Paul associates are Jewish names with the exception of Titus Justus, while in the Epistle the names are Greek, such as Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus, the observation is true as far as it goes, with a few exceptions. We have already noticed that the name of Crispus presents a difficulty to Weizsäcker, of which he presents a most inadequate explanation. The names of Crispus and Gaius, with Aquila and Priscilla, form links of connection between the narrative in the historical book and the allusions of the Epistles. As to his reference to Aquila and Priscilla, it strikes us as sheer trifling. Luke says that they went with Paul from Corinth to Ephesus, and the First Epistle to the Corinthians has the following: “Aquila and Prisca salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.”¹ What is there to make it at all unlikely that both statements are true? We may say that the accounts are clear and consistent enough. No doubt it is true that Paul does not say, when he mentions their names, that they had been with him at Corinth, that they wrought with him at tent-making, and had travelled with him to Ephesus. But we venture to submit that Paul was not bound to write a biography of every person whose name he mentions. It appears, however,

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

that they had a good house in Ephesus. Well, they had a house in Corinth sufficiently large to enable them to offer hospitality to Paul, and it is possible that they may have been in better circumstances at Ephesus. Property, which they could not have realised before their hasty departure from Rome, may have been realised afterwards. It is clear, therefore, that Weizsäcker's difficulty is a manufactured article.

We are glad, however, to agree with the view of Weizsäcker, "that the two Epistles of the Apostle to this congregation are in the highest sense historical."¹ This, indeed, is no new view of his. He had formerly described it as "a fragment of ecclesiastical history like no other," and the sections which he gives to its exposition in the work we have frequently referred to are of very great value. But while he holds the historical worth of the Epistles to be of such unique value, it is quite gratuitous on his part to cast doubts on the historical worth of the Acts of the Apostles. The agreement between the two accounts becomes more manifest the more the two are studied. It by no means lies on the surface; it forms an underlying harmony. We read in the Acts that Paul was in a depressed state of mind such as made him long for encouragement, and the encouragement he receives in a vision. We are not told what the cause was of his mental depression. As far as the story is concerned it may have been fear of the Jews, it may have been bodily weakness, or any other cause. We are simply informed of its existence and of its removal. When we turn to the First Epistle we read what precisely fills up the space left vacant, as it were, in the history: "I was with you in weakness and fear and in much trembling." It is not thus that a man describes bodily weakness or the apprehension he has of danger or of persecution. These words do not suggest to us thoughts of such a trouble as he describes when he speaks of the thorn in the flesh, the buffeting messenger of Satan. Weakness, fear, and much trembling indicate much more—causes of a mental, moral, and spiritual sort. Nor are these far to seek. The words follow closely on his description of the resolution he had formed not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He had not come among them with "excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the mystery of God."² The source of his weakness, fear, and trembling was, how would this line of con-

¹ Op. cit., p. 265.

² 1 Cor. ii. 1.

duct succeed? How would the Greeks receive such a message, delivered in such a manner? Here, when he had cut himself loose from the synagogue, he would be far from the help he was wont to receive from the law and the prophets, and from the manifold associations he had in common with Jews and proselytes. Nor had he merely to deal with the rude and crude polytheism and nature worship of uncultured races, such as he had seen in Lycaonia; nor with the stronger, simpler natures such as he had found in the Roman colony at Philippi, and among the working men at Thessalonica. The situation is quite new to him. He is to face a cultured Greek audience, and he has deliberately resolved to seek no adventitious help from excellence of speech, or dialectical skill, or from the graces of oratorical art. These—may we not say?—he had tried at Athens, with the result that he never got his message delivered. He is resolved to put in the forefront the simple testimony to Jesus and His Cross. What shall the issue be of such a venture? As he weighed the possible consequences of his resolution, and realised the vast issues involved, we do not wonder that he was in fear and in much trembling, and that he recorded the word sent him in a vision. “Fear not—I have much people in this city.”

Thus encouraged the Apostle persevered, and spoke of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. His speech and his preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. He had his reward for setting aside those helps to persuasion which men had laid so much stress on, for the faith of the Corinthians, looking past the speaker to his message, grounded itself, not on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. There was also a certain penalty he had to pay for his daring resolution. His opponents felt and expressed a sort of contempt for him and for his mental power. They felt that his bodily presence was weak, and his speech of no account, that he was rude in speech.¹ So he quotes their sayings when he writes the Second Epistle to them. He was content to run the risk. He is persuaded that Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. He is persuaded also that “God chose the foolish things of the world, that He might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that He might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base

¹ 2 Cor. x. 11., xi. 6.

things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that He might bring to nought the things that are."¹ In writing thus he was able to see that his resolution and his conduct had been right and successful. But it needed great courage and great faith to make the experiment. It was the strain and agony of making this resolution which made him afraid, and here, therefore, we have the point of contact between the history and the Epistle.

When we look with some care into these Corinthian Epistles for traces of the historical conditions under which Paul began his work among the Greeks, we are amply rewarded. No doubt there is also a number of questions we may ask to which only a very inadequate answer can be given. But we obtain many glimpses into actual life and real history which are invaluable. We learn that Paul was unmistakably the founder of the Corinthian Church. It was he who planted;² it was he who, as a master-builder, had laid the foundation.³ Others may have watered what he had planted, or may have built on the foundation he had laid, but no one could claim to say as he could say, "Are not ye my work in the Lord?"⁴ "Though ye should have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel."⁵ They were "the seal of mine apostleship in the Lord."⁶ And further, to clench the whole matter, he says again, "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables which are hearts of flesh."⁷ Thus he vindicates his claim to be their spiritual father, and at the same time shows of what kind his work among them had been. In entire agreement with the Acts of the Apostles, he reminds them that with Silvanus and Timothy⁸ he had preached the gospel unto them, that his main business among them had been to preach the gospel. True, he had baptized Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas, but he came not to baptize, but to preach.

There is no difficulty about the fact that the house of

¹ 1 Cor. i. 27-28.

² Ibid. iii. 6.

³ Ibid. iii. 10.

⁴ Ibid. ix. 1.

⁵ Ibid. iv. 15.

⁶ Ibid. ix. 2.

⁷ 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.

⁸ Ibid. i. 19.

Stephanas 'was the firstfruits of Achaia.'¹ Some, indeed, find this statement inconsistent with the other statement contained in the Acts of the Apostles, that Paul knew Aquila and Priscilla before he knew any other one at Corinth. Let it be granted that they were his first converts at Corinth, yet they were Jews, not Gentiles, dwellers at Rome and at Ephesus, who had been at Corinth only for a short time, and they could not, in any proper sense of the word, be said to be the firstfruits of Achaia. The people to whom he writes were for the most part of Gentile origin, as the topics he had to discuss with them were such as could have arisen only among people who had been trained under Gentile influences. They had been Gentiles. "Ye know that when ye were Gentiles ye were led away unto those dumb idols, howsoever ye might be led."² They had fallen away from faith in the one God. They were of those who had misread the first and primary revelation of God, and were of the world which by wisdom had not known God. "Seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God," a statement which sets forth both the eagerness and the failure of the Greek search after God. To them, then, he had given the Divine message, and had told of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He had not set speculation against speculation, but against speculation he had placed what he calls the foolishness of preaching. The weak things had been stronger than the strong. In his preaching, and in their reception of it; in their own life, and in their social standing, the same principles found illustration. "The weakness of God was stronger than men." He had fed them with milk, and not with meat, for they were not able to bear anything stronger;³ and in this fact he finds the peril of transition from the story of his past treatment of them to the teaching he has yet to give.

His first aim is to put an end to the divisions in the Church of Corinth. These had been many and grievous. They had not reached so far as to break the external unity of the Church, but they had been productive of very mischievous effects. We do not intend to enter on the great subject of the history and character of these divisions. Nor need we inquire what was the origin of the various parties, the party of Apollos, of Cephas, of Christ, of Paul. We may say that these divisions,

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 15.

² Ibid. xii. 2.

³ Ibid. iii. 1, 2.

in the very number and variety of them, are inconsistent with the view taken of them by Baur and his followers. That there were an Apollos-party and a Christ-party is proof sufficient of this. For in no way can these be brought into harmony with the view which splits up the Christian Church into two great parties, the Pauline and the Petrine. But we may not deal more fully with this point.

In order to settle the questions on which an appeal was made to him, Paul sets himself first to vindicate his Apostolic authority. This he does in such a way as to win the assent of all parties in the congregation, and to induce them to recognise his authority. All parties in Corinth agree to submit to him who was their founder, their father in Christ Jesus; for all, wherever they were, were watering what he had planted, and building on the foundation he had laid. He needed no other proof of his Apostleship than the fact of their own existence as Christians. They were the proofs of his Apostleship. Party names and party spirit should vanish, for all alike belonged to them. So he disposes of the party question. He has next to give his decision on the other questions submitted to him, some of which are of a purely moral order, some belong to public worship, and some to doctrine. The questions submitted to him were particular, had a local colour, and many peculiarities of time and place and circumstance. The answers he gives to them are universal; they are based on grounds which transcend time and place, and avail for man's moral guidance everywhere and always.

How does Paul win his way to those universal principles on which his particular decisions are given? Many of the topics which he has to discuss, and on which he has to decide, were such as could not have been raised in a congregation that knew the Old Testament. They could arise only among a people who had once been heathen; some of them could arise only among Greeks, or those who are ethnically akin to Greeks. The question as to the nature and character of the resurrection was essentially a Greek question. Paul could not decide these questions by the exercise of mere personal authority, nor could he settle them by an appeal to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. What is his method, and what is his principle? It is most instructive to watch his procedure, and to observe how he ascends to what is universal. His method is to

ascend from each particular question to Christ. He assumes that Christ is universal, that what can be drawn from Christ is of universal application. Take the party question. "Each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ."¹ How does Paul resolve the difficulty? By a reference to the historical Christ, to the unity, and to the uniqueness of the work and power of Christ. At the beginning of the argument by the indignant series of questions, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" and after his long argumentation by the affirmations, "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's,"² he settles the question of divisions, and settles it by reference to the merits of Christ's person and the unexampled greatness of Christ's work. Christians cannot call themselves by any lesser name than His. To do so would raise the other name to a false position, would do dishonour to Christ's name, and would defraud the Christian of his greatest possession, which is Christ.

From these Epistles we gather further illustrations of the manner in which Paul finds universal principles in order to settle particular questions, and finds them in Christ. Has he to decide questions of practical discipline involving the peace and purity of the Church, he finds the decision, and the principle which rules the decision, in the presence and the person of the Risen Lord. The body is sacred, belongs to Christ, and must therefore be kept pure. Thus the doctrine of the Risen Christ gives to the Apostle a new basis and a new sanction for morality. He does not need to travel far, nor to discuss questions of the schools, in order to vindicate the sacredness of the moral life and the necessary purity of social relations. He gets the principle at one step by asking, "Know ye not that your bodies are members of Christ?"³

With like simplicity and directness he is able to guide the conscience of the people in the grave question of Christian liberty generally, and with special regard to the use which Christians might make of things sacrificed to idols. Here, too, he finds a solution in the gospel of Christ and Him crucified. There is "One Lord Jesus Christ, through whom

¹ 1. Cor. i. 12.

² *Ibid.* iii. 23.

³ *Ibid.* vi. 15.

are all things, and we through Him.”¹ Those who can rise to the knowledge that there is only one God, and that idols are nothing, are free, and may act at their discretion. But there is one limit to their freedom, and the place and manner in which the limit is set down by Paul is characteristic of the way in which out of particular instances he evolves a universal principle. The man who has been persuaded that an idol is nothing may not act on this principle if he cause his brother to offend. A man may not use his liberty if the exercise of it becomes a stumbling-block to the weak. Why? We note the answer. It is not because there may be selfishness in that use of liberty, nor that it injures the conscience of others, nor that it is generally injurious, but because the weak one who perisheth is a “brother for whose sake Christ died.” So here also the restraint on liberty is itself a sign of freedom, and is brought by Paul into the closest relation with the work of Christ, and with loyalty to the person of Christ.

The instructions given as to Church order, as to the administration of the Lord’s Supper, and as to the orderly arrangement of the worship of the sanctuary, are, in like manner, found in the relation which public worship bears to Christ. “The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?”² And Christ is one. So Christ is the head of every man, and because of that principle Paul lays down that women are to have no part in the leading of the prayers of the congregation. The existence and the working of spiritual gifts in the Church, whatsoever and however various these gifts, are to be ruled by the reference they bear to Christ. They are to be exercised in subordination to the unity of the Church, and the unity of the Church is determined by its union with the one Lord.

Paul finds also that what he has come to know of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ gives him a key for the settlement of all doctrinal questions which may arise. The most striking illustration of this statement is found in the great discussion contained in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle. There the doctrine of the person of Christ becomes for him the key to unlock the mystery of the universe, and to unveil the mystery of the future life. It enables him to see and to teach that Christ must work on till the kingdom of God is complete,

¹ I Cor. viii. 6.

² Ibid. x. 16.

and until the unity to which His work tends is attained, till He shall deliver up the kingdom unto the Father, that God may be all in all. It enables him also to grasp the mystery of the spiritual body, and both to understand and teach that the body of the risen shall be perfectly fitted for the manifestation of spirit. For in the phrase spiritual body, spiritual does not express the stuff or substance of which the body is made, but the purpose which it is fitted to make manifest. To pass from that, we see that the doctrine of Christ gives to the Apostle a principle, to enforce order, to banish divisions, to maintain purity, to guide worship, to teach the place and use of gifts, and to maintain sound doctrine. We do not at present make any further study of these Epistles. We have said so much on them, for the light thus cast on the conditions of his work at Corinth. He did not determine to know anything among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. How will this resolution of his bear on the workings of the subtle Greek mind? The Greeks had been for ages accustomed to the most thorough discussion of all sorts of subjects, and had fashioned for themselves the most powerful instruments of discussion that the world had ever seen. Questions of physics, of psychology, of metaphysics, of ethics, had eagerly been discussed, and the discussion was not any nearer an end. Can the Apostle bring to bear on the settlement of such questions a principle which will work, and afford practical solutions? These Epistles are the answer to such questions. They prove that he was wise and wisely guided in his resolution. And we see how grandly the doctrine of Jesus Christ and Him crucified gives direct answers to the questions which arose, and to other questions which Greece had asked throughout the ages, and had asked in vain.

CHAPTER X.

IN EPHEBUS.

Visit to Jerusalem—Journey through Phrygia and Galatia—Apollos—Ephesus—John's disciples—In the synagogue—Work in Ephesus—Its nature and its conspicuous success—Triumph of the gospel—Exorcists and their defeat—Burning of the magic books—Demetrius—Loss of trade—The tumult at Ephesus—The town clerk—Historical illustration of the truth of the narrative in Book of Acts—Perils of the Apostle—His toils and labours—The Epistle to the Ephesians—The Ephesian Church.

PAUL, having for the time completed his work in Corinth, departed for Syria. He took with him Priscilla and Aquila. It is mentioned also that, at Cenchrea, the eastern port of Corinth, he had shorn his head, for he had a vow. What the vow was, and for what purpose made, we do not know ; but the fact itself is not without significance. It shows that for himself Paul had no objection to conform to Jewish observances, and it shows also and explains the resolute manner in which he set aside all solicitations to turn aside, and made his way as directly and swiftly as possible to Jerusalem. When he arrived at Ephesus he found an opportunity of speaking to the Jews, and he promptly availed himself of it. His reception was of a most encouraging nature : so willingly did they receive him that they were reluctant to let him go. But he could not abide with them. Perhaps he had with him the contributions which he had commanded to be made in all the Churches for the poor saints of Jerusalem. Some pressing need urged him on, and he departed, giving them a promise that he would return again as soon as he could. Of the people whom he saw, of the words he spake, and of the deeds he did at Jerusalem during this visit, Luke says

nothing. All that is said is, "He went up and saluted the Church, and went down to Antioch." Not a word either about his stay at Antioch, only that he had "spent some time there, and then went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, stablishing all the disciples."¹

At this point Luke tells us the story of Apollos, on which much might be said, were there time. It is of great value because of the light it casts on the state of belief in many Jewish minds, and because of the confirmation it lends to the historical character of the Acts of the Apostles. It indicates that many Jews had been influenced by John the Baptist, had accepted his baptism, and had believed the testimony which John had given to the Messiah. They had, however, not advanced beyond the position of John, and did not know what had come to pass since then. Apollos was one of these, and while he taught what he knew, he had an open mind, and was ready to be more fully instructed. This instruction was given him by Aquila and Priscilla, and he was persuaded and taught with incisive power that Jesus was the Christ. Then we are told that he passed over into Achaia, made Corinth his headquarters, and "helped them much who had believed through grace,"² thus giving us the true historical explanation of the rise of an Apollos-party at Corinth, and giving an invaluable testimony to the historic verity of the Acts of the Apostles.

Meanwhile Paul, "having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus." It is likely that he passed through Lycaonia, Galatia, Phrygia, and then through Philadelphia, on to Ephesus, a city which was to be his home for about three years, and in which he was to have many strange experiences. The first thing recorded of him is his finding of certain disciples, who had been baptized into John's baptism, and who had not been more fully instructed. Paul, thinking them to be believers in Christ, from the company in which he found them, asked, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?"³ Their reply was, "Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given."⁴ As they were disciples of John the Baptist, they must have heard of his testimony to One who should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, but they had not heard of the actual outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and were ignorant of the fulfilment of the prophecy of the Baptist. To

¹ Acts xviii. 23. ² Ibid. xviii. 27. ³ Ibid. xix. 1. ⁴ Ibid. xix. 2.

them Paul gives the needed explanation. He recognised fully the state in which they were, and also the value of the work of the Baptist. "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus."¹ So they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and soon had full experience of the power and grandeur of the new dispensation. "The Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."² We see here how Paul was wont to deal with Christians who were imperfectly informed, and how he led them to make full proof of the reality of their faith.

Remembering the principle involved in his own statement, "To the Jew first," Paul begins his Ephesian ministry in the synagogue. But the promise of his former flying visit is not realised. Having for some three months striven to persuade the Jews of the things concerning the kingdom of God, and finding that some of them were hardened and disobedient, that they were speaking evil of the Way among the multitude, he departed from them. "The Way" seems to have become a name for the Christian religion. The Jews not only were hardened and disobedient, but they strove to arouse the multitude against the Christians. When the tumult arose later on, we see that the Jews took an active part in it—at least they wished to show that they did not approve of the action of Paul.³ Paul, therefore, took no further part in the worship of the synagogue, separated the disciples from the Jews, and daily—not merely at the time when the synagogue met—set forth the argument for the faith. He found a meeting-place in the school of Tyrannus. Of his laborious, continuous, and arduous ministry, he himself speaks thus: "I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴ For two years he thus went on—for nearly three years altogether, counting the three months of his work in the synagogue—and the results were of the most striking order. They heard the word in Ephesus, and from Ephesus the word went forth throughout all Proconsular Asia. From this time also the rise of the Seven Churches may be dated, and such other Churches as that at Colossæ.

¹ Acts xix. 4.² Ibid. xix. 6.³ Ibid. xix. 34.⁴ Ibid. xx. 20.

The work at Ephesus is described by Luke in the most exalted terms. Divine power rested manifestly and continuously upon the Apostle. It was present not merely to enlighten the minds, renew the wills, and give new hearts to the people. The Divine power overflowed the spiritual kingdom, passed over into the natural world, and wrought continuously through the Apostle. "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul : insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out."¹ It is worthy of note that the power is not ascribed to Paul, but to God. God works through Paul. This is recognised by all, even by the sons of Sceva, who feel that it is not to Paul, but to Jesus, that the power is to be ascribed. There were many pretenders to miraculous powers in Ephesus, and manifold were the charms and rites by which they were supposed to be exerted. But all recognised that with Paul there was a difference. For Paul had no power in himself, nor by means of any incantation. The power was wielded by Paul's Master. There may have been a good deal of superstition mixed with the true and real faith of those who received the handkerchiefs and aprons from the body of Paul, but it was not to the superstition, but to the faith, that the reward of healing was given. God does recognise and bless real faith, though it may be mixed with superstitious elements, and when this is so, true faith will soon root out and eliminate that extraneous and unnecessary ingredient.

Luke gives us, as is usual with him, two scenes from the Ephesian ministry of Paul. Both of them illustrate the Ephesian state of mind, and the difficulties which encumbered the way of Paul. The first incident reveals the unbounded superstition of the people of Ephesus ; the second shows how the greed of gain fosters superstition, and how it makes those who benefit by superstition resent every means of enlightenment. The wonderful works which God wrought by means of Paul excited the curiosity and greed of certain strolling Jews. These seem to have gone from place to place preying on the ignorance and credulity of the people. They made a profession of it, and were utterly unscrupulous in the means they used for amusing and gratifying the superstitious longings of the multitude. They always had, or

¹ Acts xix. 12.

professed to have, spells and charms for the cure of diseases. They thought that the name of Jesus was simply a spell by which Paul worked, and that the spell wrought irrespective of all moral conditions. They resolved to add this charm to the others they were wont to use. It seems there were many of these strolling Jews who "took upon them to name over them which had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth."¹ There was a widespread belief among the Jews as to the effect which might be wrought through the utterance of the name of God. And this belief found expression here. There were seven sons of one Sceva, a chief priest, which did this. They were men who were exorcists, who professed to be able to expel evil spirits. Apparently they felt that they were surpassed in their own particular sphere by Paul, and they determined to use the spell used by Paul. They did so, to their own surprise and utter discomfiture. To their adjuration the evil spirit answered: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"² As if he had said, I recognise that Jesus has power over me, and I know that Paul is the servant of Jesus, through whom Jesus works; but you are no followers of Jesus. And the man, with that unusual power which madmen so often can exert, "leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." Only two of the seven who had agreed to use the new formula were present when it failed.

It must have caused great excitement among those who witnessed the hurried flight of the two men, with clothes torn to shreds and bodies which bore the marks of the madman's fierce onslaught. The news quickly spread, and made a great impression. Both Jews and Greeks heard it, and all felt that the trade of exorcism had received a deadly shock. The first impression was fear. Jews and Greeks alike felt themselves to be in the presence of a power which they could not measure, and magnified that power and the name which to them symbolised it. But this impression was even greater on the minds of those who had believed, and who up to this time had not realised that faith in Jesus was incompatible with the practice of charms and with belief in spells. It brought home to them the conviction that as followers of Christ they must

¹ Acts xix. 13.

² Ibid. xix. 15.

have done with all kinds of sorcery ; so they came confessing and declaring their deeds. It is not necessary for us to enter into a discussion, or to give a description, of the curious arts or of the books which contained the rules of such arts. They are not of so much importance as to justify such waste of time. Ephesian curious arts had much in common with arts of the same kind still in vogue, which ought to meet the fate which befell the books at Ephesus. The thing worthy of being noted is the fact that the people who believed in these arts ceased to believe in them : and they brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. They had themselves suffered from them, and they resolved that henceforth these books should no longer be sources of temptation to other people. Though they were of the value of fifty thousand pieces of silver, yet they were burnt. It must have been a business that brought much gain, and was very profitable, since the stock-in-trade was so costly. This triumph over greed and superstition is set down by the historian as a victory won by the Word of God ; and he adds, "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed." ¹

A sacrifice so costly seemed to show that the Church at Ephesus was firmly built on the one foundation, and Paul, therefore, felt free to form those great and far-reaching plans for the propagation of the gospel which would have led him to the bounds of the known world. He purposed to go again through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, and then to Rome. In order to be prepared, he sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia, that the contributions of the Churches might be in readiness. He stayed in Asia for a time. While he thus waited an incident occurred which made manifest how great was the progress made by the gospel in Ephesus, and how it was modifying the character and customs of the inhabitants. We know from many sources, and particularly from Pliny's letter to Trajan ² about the Christians, that the effect of Christianity was to make the temples desolate, to cause the sacred solemnities to cease, and to make the purchasers of the meat offered to idols very few in number. In a similar way, the trade of the silver-shrine makers at Ephesus was endangered by the spread of Christianity. Christians naturally

¹ Acts xix. 20.

² Hardy, "Pliny's Correspondence with Trajan," p. 215.

ceased to purchase them, and those who were not Christians would be influenced by their example. The trade had been most lucrative. Apparently these little models in silver of the temple, or of the shrine in which the image was preserved, were made of various sizes, and were decorated with all the resources of Greek art. They might be used both as ornaments and as charms. They gratified at once the Greek love of the beautiful and the Greek desire for devotion. Very likely also a great number was bought by the visitors and pilgrims to Ephesus.

The trade had been decreasing for some time, but the decrease became alarming after the scene of the public burning of the magic books. The gains of the craftsmen were vanishing, and it was their sense of loss which caused the uproar. The man who gathered the craftsmen together and took the leading part in the movement was Demetrius. The speech he is said to have delivered was a most skilful one, and the motives he appeals to are such as are always easily stirred. His first appeal is to their self-interest. They were all engaged in the manufacture of these shrines, and their living depended on its prosperity. But the appeal to self-interest, though keenly felt by these workmen, could not be made so evident to others, so it is fortified by an appeal to religion and to patriotism. He shows them that Paul had, both at Ephesus and almost throughout all Asia, persuaded the people that there are no gods made with hands; and the people had believed him. They ceased to worship Diana, and ceased to buy her shrines. So trade was in danger, and religion was brought into neglect; and if matters were allowed to go on, "the temple of the great goddess Diana should be made of no account, and she should even be deposed from her magnificence, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth."¹ The way in which the religious question is mixed up with the question of private gain is characteristic. It was also quite successful; for a man who might not care to agitate because of private interest would find a good plea for agitation when the interests of religion were supposed to be at stake.

It was the religious cry that took the multitude. At the deft touch of Demetrius they were filled with wrath, and responsive to his crafty lead, they cried out, "Great is Diana of the

¹ Acts xix. 26, 27.

Ephesians.”¹ The sudden angry shout of the assembled craftsmen filled the city with confusion. The citizens were agitated by the presence and demeanour of these excited men; though they might not have much interest in the gains of the craftsmen, they had an interest in the temple, and in the goddess of the temple. At the cry, which seemed to indicate that the temple or the goddess was in some danger, the people rushed into the streets, and gathering round the makers of the tumult, they followed them in their rush into the theatre. They had laid hold of Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s companions in travel, and had carried them with them into the theatre. Paul would have entered into the theatre to share the peril of his companions, but the disciples prevented him. The Asiarchs—the officers who presided over the games and festivals, and who were people of position and importance—knowing better than Paul did what risks he would run, sent to beseech him not to enter into the theatre. So he was constrained to wait in safety, though in great anxiety about his friends.

Meanwhile there was a strange scene within the theatre. We feel that there is a gleam of humour in the mind of Luke as he describes the situation. Some cried one thing, and some another. All was in confusion. There was no one to explain why they had gathered together, and the most part knew not wherefore they were come together. Demetrius did not attempt to put himself forward, nor were the people in a mood to listen to any one. They were in that state of mind, deeply alarmed, vaguely apprehensive of danger, which might lead to the most violent outrages, and to destruction of property and of life. It was well indeed that the Apostle was not in their view, for his presence might have given aim and directness to their anger, and he might have fallen a victim to their fury. The Jews sought to take advantage of the Gentile tumult. They put forward one Alexander—for what purpose we scarcely know. It may have been that they were afraid of being identified with Paul, and were alarmed at the prospect of the popular fury turning against themselves. At the sight of the Jewish features the excitement of the people increased. They refused a hearing to Alexander, and occupied themselves with the only thing that occurred to them. They showed their zeal and their devotion, and their physical endurance, by continuing to shout for two

¹ Acts xix. 29.

hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." The frenzy of fanaticism had been kindled, and was persisted in till they were exhausted. Two hours spent in energetic shouting was enough to exhaust the energy of the strongest man.

At length the town clerk succeeded in obtaining a hearing. In the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles we meet with many official people, and with many magistrates. Perhaps the most calm, wise, and judicious of them all is this town clerk of Ephesus. Evidently he is a man of great dignity, shrewdness, and sagacity, and suited to the high office he filled in that great city. If Demetrius knew well how to play upon the greed and religious enthusiasm of the people, the town clerk knew what to bring forward in order to make the people feel their responsibility and realise the risks they ran. The speech is a masterpiece, and touches briefly and aptly on all that required to be said. There is first the concession to the religious devotion and religious feelings of the people of Ephesus. He concedes to the full the claims of Diana and her image, and reminds them that the Ephesian city is the temple-keeper of the great Diana. Why should they do anything rashly, or why should they have apprehended these men, "which are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess"?¹ As to him who was chief promoter of the uproar, if Demetrius and the craftsmen had any ground of complaint, there were ways whereby they might be satisfied without involving other people. To make a riot was neither the proper nor the safe way to remedy a grievance. The courts are open, and there are proconsuls. If it is a matter that could not well be settled before the proconsuls, there are other and regular ways by which these matters can be settled. Let them call a regular assembly. Having thus disposed both of the religious pretence and of the special grievance of Demetrius, the town clerk points out to them the great risk they had run in making this tumult. How should they answer for it if they were ever accused about the riot they had made? Thus with dignified common sense he brought the multitude back to calmness, and made them feel how foolish they had been. Having thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly, and they went to their homes sadder and wiser men.

Confirmations of the historical truth and appropriateness

¹ Acts xix. 37.

of this story have recently been brought to light. We take the following summary from Bishop Lightfoot,¹ who has made use of Wood's "Ephesus" in drawing it up. From the inscriptions we read with regard to the goddess, that "not only in this city, but everywhere temples are dedicated to the goddess, and statues erected and altars consecrated to her, on account of the manifest epiphanies which she vouchsafes;" that a month bears her name, and during that month "solemn assemblies and religious festivals are held more specially in this one city, which is the nurse of its own Ephesian goddess," and that therefore "the people of the Ephesians, considering it meet that the whole of this month which bears the divine name, should be kept holy and dedicated to the goddess, has decreed accordingly." "For so the cultus being set on a better footing, our city will continue to grow in glory, and to be prosperous to all time." Ephesus had, we find, a special sense of belonging to the goddess, and she also belonged to the city. She is called "the supremely great goddess;" she has her priestesses, her temple curators, her divines, and many other classes of servants. Fines and endowments are appropriated to her service, decrees are issued for the public exhibition of her treasures, and she is as much at home in the theatre as she is in her own sanctuary. Then the theatre is the recognised place of public assembly. "Here edicts are proclaimed, and decrees recorded, and benefactors crowned. When the mob, under the leadership of Demetrius, gathered here for the demonstration against St. Paul and his companions, they would find themselves surrounded by memorials, which might stimulate their zeal for the goddess. If the 'town clerk' had desired to make good his assertion, 'What man is there that knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is sacristan of the great goddess Artemis?' he had only to point to the inscriptions which lined the theatre for confirmation. The very stones would have cried out from the walls in response to his appeal."

Dr. Lightfoot points out also how accurately Luke uses the names, and how exactly he discriminates the offices of the various magistrates. He mentions three of them, the proconsul, the town clerk, and the Asiarchs or presidents of the games and other religious ceremonials, and shows that the inscriptions and the Acts of the Apostles are always in exact correspondence. Other illustrations also occur, as, when the

¹ "On Supernatural Religion," pp. 298-300.

town clerk says, These men are "neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess." We find from the Inscriptions that these were crimes of the gravest order. Dr. Lightfoot¹ has other illustrations of the fact that the author of the Acts writes with the most minute accuracy, and manifests the most perfect knowledge of his subject.

We find, however, that the Acts of the Apostles, in the account of Paul's work at Ephesus, conveys to us but a faint impression of the difficulties he had to meet, and the perils and toils he had to undergo during the three years of his residence there. In his farewell address at Miletus to the elders of Ephesus he speaks of himself as "serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews ;"² plots of which we find hardly a trace in Luke's narrative. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians he refers to the "affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life."³ This must have taken place at Ephesus. Paul frequently uses the name of a province for the name of its chief city. The trouble which he describes in such terms must have been one of no ordinary kind even in his experience. Perhaps the most striking of all the references to his Ephesian experiences is found in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, written during his residence in Ephesus. The Apostle is speaking of the constant peril in which he stood. He is in jeopardy every hour. "I protest by that glorying in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."⁴ He is evidently speaking under the pressure of present painful experience, and the next verse gives us even more the impression of a real and recent event. "If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me?" This is no mere metaphor ; it is a reference to a matter of fact. To refer to his Roman citizenship as if the possession of it by him would have rendered it impossible that he should have been constrained to fight literally with wild beasts, is altogether beside the mark. Paul had been thrice beaten with rods, and once had been stoned, and these things happened to him, his Roman citizenship notwithstanding. Nor does a comparison with the narrative in Acts help us in any attempt to understand the

¹ Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

² Acts xx. 19.

³ 2 Cor. i. 8.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 31, 32.

reference figuratively. As far as the narrative in Acts goes, this might have happened either before or after the uproar excited by Demetrius. There is nothing more likely than that the people, in a sudden outburst of frenzy, may have compelled Paul to fight for his life with wild beasts. That there is no reference to such an event in the Acts of the Apostles, is true ; but how many events of a similar kind happened to Paul, of which no hint is given in the Acts !

We therefore take the statement in its literal meaning. It is a conflict not with men ferocious as wild beasts, but with wild beasts themselves, to which the Apostle refers, as an illustration of the fact that he is in jeopardy every hour, and dies daily. This was one of the great perils from which he was rescued, and it may well be that his peril and deliverance were the means of his obtaining a new standing-ground, from which he might win men for Christ. This event may be the explanation of his resolution. "For I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost ; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries."¹ At all events, this passage along with others gives us some conception of the tremendous difficulties he had to meet, and of the awful conditions under which he had to carry on his work. He literally had to carry his life in his hand. The plots of the Jews might suddenly be crowned with success. The sudden rage of the Greeks might consign him to the wild beasts, and yet, notwithstanding these risks, Paul continued for three years to work on in Ephesus and its neighbourhood. As we think of all the circumstances, we are impressed with the calm courage and mighty endurance of the man. He will not shrink from his work, nor will he leave his post till his work is done. One day in the arena fighting with wild beasts, and delivered from them—we know not how—and the next day, perhaps, setting himself to dictate those letters to the Corinthians which have been as the very Word of God to many generations ; and that work done, going forth from house to house to comfort and strengthen the disciples, and in the evening preaching the gospel to the assembled people. What a vast and complicated variety of duties fall to this man, and with what wondrous strength, versatility, and wisdom he rises equal to the discharge of them all !

The perils and travail he has to undergo, he can calmly think

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9.

of and describe as "things that are without,"¹ and he accepts them as they come. He feels more deeply the burden, "that which presseth on me daily, anxiety for all the churches." This anxiety he had in abundant measure during the time of his stay at Ephesus. The letters written from it show how painfully he feels this anxiety, and how he laboured to warn, exhort, instruct, and guide all the Churches he had founded. We may thus form some conception of the conditions under which Paul carried on his work. Truly he might well say, "I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."² We know also that at Ephesus he had to bear along with all other burdens the burden of physical toil. "I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me."³

From the Epistle which Paul, during the time of his imprisonment at Rome, wrote to the Ephesians, we do not obtain anything illustrative of the conditions under which his work at Ephesus was carried on. The Epistle is almost entirely lacking in personal allusions, and we shall not therefore dwell on it here. But we may glance for a moment at the address he gave to the elders when he bade them farewell. He foresaw that both from without and from within perils would arise which should threaten the peace of the flock. "Grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock"; and from within from among themselves men should arise, speaking perverse things, to draw any disciples after them. His fears were too soon realised. He found himself slighted and forgotten, after all his care and sufferings in their behalf. He writes with great sadness to Timothy: "Thou knowest, that all that are in Asia turned away from me; of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes."⁴ The old magic arts and superstitions had resumed their ancient sway, and wrought mischief within the Church itself. "Evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived;"⁵ and false teachers were at work, with their profane babblings: "for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of whom is

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 28.² Acts xx. 24.³ Ibid. xx. 33-35.⁴ 2 Tim. i. 15.⁵ Ibid. iii. 13.

Hymenæus and Philetus ; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some.”¹ With an anxiety born of the memory of former labours among them, and of present love for them, Paul exhorts Timothy to be faithful, and to guide them back into the ways of truth. We need not be surprised that these tendencies should have showed themselves in this home of Greek speculation about the nature and the law of things. From the time of Heraclitus onwards Ephesus had been a centre of Greek speculation, rivalling Athens in this respect ; and here also was abundant evidence of the influence of Asiatic tendencies and modes of thought and life. And we should naturally have expected that Paul would write to them, and to Churches in the same region, those Epistles which set forth his deepest and widest thoughts on God and His eternal purpose ; on Christ, His person, His cosmical position, and His work ; and on man his nature, vocation, and destiny.

Nor need we be surprised, when we consider all the forces and tendencies which met in Ephesus, that here, in the providence of God, the last survivor of the Apostles should have for years his residence, and from it should go forth the gospel he lived to write. John, the beloved disciple, came to the Church founded by Paul, and took charge of the Church which had been rent by wolves, and torn by traitors from within. He found the Church at Ephesus fallen from the depth and fervour of her first love, but with various redeeming features, which had prevented her from falling to the depth of unconscious degradation to which Laodicea had come. The Ephesian Church had works, and labour, and patience ; they could not bear evil men ; they had offered a steadfast resistance to those who claimed the office and name of Apostles that they might undo the work of Paul. All these things they had, and with a return to the fervour of their first love it would still be well with them. How great that fervour had been, may be seen by recalling the scene of the burning of the magic books. Full of interest also is the later history of the Church of Ephesus, but on it we may not dwell. Indeed what we have said has been said mainly for the light it throws on the nature, extent, and intensity of the work of Paul, and for the illustration it gives of the truth, tenderness, and endurance of his great character.

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17.

CHAPTER XI.

FROM EPHESUS TO JERUSALEM.

Visit to the Churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Greece—Jewish plot—
The companions of the Apostle—A day in Troas—Its incidents and results—At Miletus—Address to the elders of Ephesus—The pathetic farewell—Voyage to Tyre—Warnings—In Cæsarea—Philip the Evangelist—Agabus the prophet—His symbolic prophecy—St. Paul's resolve—Arrival at Jerusalem—Meeting with James and the brethren—Their advice to St. Paul—He acts on it—Result.

IN fulfilment of the purpose he had formed, Paul, as soon as he could after the uproar had ceased at Ephesus, left for Macedonia. He went first to Troas, expecting to meet Titus there. "When I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ, and when a door was opened to me in the Lord, I had no relief for my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother : but taking my leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia." ¹ He visited the Churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, and passed on to Greece. It is likely that in some one of these places he found Luke, who may have been here ever since the former visit of Paul. For we find that the narrative at this point is again resumed in the first person. Paul was in Greece for three months ; he was about to sail for Asia when he received such tidings of a Jewish plot against him as made him change the direction of his journey. The Jews at Corinth, who had formerly tried to prejudice Gallio against him, were resolved to take matters in their own hands. The particulars of the plot are not made known to us, but it must have been intended to be carried out at sea. Some Jews had probably arranged

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

to sail in the same ship with him, and to watch for an opportunity of slaying him. Those who had a knowledge of the plot warned Paul or his friends, and he went by land through Macedonia.

Quite a large company went before, and waited for Paul at Troas. There were "Sopater of Beroëa, the son of Pyrrhus ; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus ; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy ; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus."¹ These all were loyal and devoted friends, who were faithful to him now and at a later period, and whose names are often mentioned in his later Epistles. Paul and Luke were able to get safely away from Philippi, where they had tarried until the days of unleavened bread were over--a remark which shows how much attached was Paul to all the ordinances of his people, which he could observe without the sacrifice or the compromise of his Christian principles. After five days they arrive at Troas, a place which to Paul, Timothy, and Luke must have been full of interest. A few years before the three had ventured forth from it to the countries of Europe to preach the gospel among strange peoples. What a tale of work, of suffering, of endurance, they had to tell since then ! But also what a tale of triumphant success, and of enduring and eternal results ! But four Christians had gone westwards, and now the European Christians were numbered by the thousand. It was no doubt with feelings of thankful gladness that they spoke to one another of all that had happened, and made one another acquainted with the particulars of how they had fared and of what they had done.

We have some account of a day they spent in Troas. It was the Lord's day, which was now observed by Christians in memory of the Resurrection. "Upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow."² Luke was present, as we observe from the "we" which is rightly used in the Revised Version. They had come together to break bread, that is, to observe the Lord's Supper. It would be observed after the manner set forth by Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. We are told also that Paul discoursed with them, which does not mean a sermon, but a conversation in which difficulties and perplexities were propounded, and

¹ Acts xx. 4.

² Ibid. xx. 7.

were solved or cleared away by the Apostle. The meeting was prolonged until midnight. The speedy departure of the Apostle, the reluctance of the Church to part with him, and the number of topics on which they needed his advice, served to make this meeting most memorable. The place where they had met, and the "many lights," show that there were many people present. The thought of parting gave an unusual pathos to their last meeting.

We are taken away from what Paul said, and from the questions asked and answered, to the description of one of those incidents which Luke likes to tell. As the meeting went on, a young man who sat in the window "was borne down with deep sleep." He was overpowered, overcome with sleep; he could not resist it any longer. We need not suppose him to have been a careless or uninterested hearer; only there was a limit to his strength. "And as Paul discoursed yet longer, being borne down by his sleep he fell down from the third story, and was taken up dead."¹ The window was open, and the lad, buried in deep sleep, fell down to the ground, to the great alarm of the congregation. Paul went swiftly down by the outside stair—the usual way of access in Eastern houses to the upper stories. He fell on the young man, as was done in similar cases by Elijah² and Elisha,³ and he embraced him, and he knew that the youth was living. To the people he said: "Make ye no ado; for his life is in him."⁴ The worship, interrupted by the fall of Eutychus, was resumed, and they continued together, with deeply solemnised feelings, till break of day—a night to be remembered by all present, and especially by him who was still in the land of the living. It appears also that, in order to satisfy all the people of the lad's welfare, they brought him again to the upper room, and at the sight of him they were not a little comforted.

Luke and the other companions of Paul went on board and sailed for Assos, but Paul went by land, as he could easily do by the Roman road which passed from Troas through Assos. Why he should have chosen to go by land—a walk of twenty miles—we do not know. He was taken on board at Assos, and the voyage continued along the coast to Mitylene, and thence touching at various other points, they reached Miletus, some thirty miles distant from Ephesus. He had resolved not to

¹ Acts xx. 9. ² 1 Kings xvii. 21. ³ 2 Kings iv. 34. ⁴ Acts xx. 11.

visit Ephesus. He was pressed for time, and he had made up his mind to reach Jerusalem, if possible, on or before the day of Pentecost. Many things might have caused delay had he visited Ephesus, and he resolved not to risk delay. The ship must have stayed at Miletus for two or three days. For Paul's messengers must have had time to go to Ephesus, and to return with the elders for whom they had been sent. "He called to him the elders of the Church,"¹ whom he also calls "bishops" a little later. It is acknowledged now on all hands that in the New Testament these words have the same meaning. When the elders of the Church were come to him, he spake to them in the most touching way. It is one of the most pathetic speeches in all literature, and it is marked throughout with phrases characteristically Pauline. Other speeches given by Luke may be a report in his own words; this speech seems to be in the very words used by Paul. It begins abruptly with the words, "Ye yourselves know." He reminds them of the past, and of the work he had done among them. He tells them of his own immediate future, as far as it lay open to his view. He knew that, go where he would, in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him. His one great aim was to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. One thing he knew, that they would see his face no more. This was his farewell. And as for themselves and their own future, let them feed the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood; let them watch against wolves from without and against traitors from within; let them follow the example of him who shrank not from declaring the whole counsel of God, so shall they also be pure from the blood of all men; and then the prayer, "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified."²

He has yet one word to say even after he has commended them to God, and to the word of His grace. He remembers how many of his new converts are weak, and how ready they are to stumble and fall. He will strive to enlist the sympathy of these elders, who are strong and wise, on behalf of those people who are morally and spiritually weak. He has appealed to them to follow his own example; he enforces that appeal by the example of a greater than himself. He recalls to

¹ Acts xx. 17.

² Ibid. xx. 32.

mind an otherwise unrecorded saying of the Lord Jesus "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive"¹--words which the Church would not willingly let die, which condense into one brief saying the whole spirit of the gospel, and of Him who is the gospel. Let the Ephesian elders remember this saying of the Lord, and be ready to help the weak, in every possible way, with sympathy, with thought, with time, with strength, and with money, making human need the measure of their giving, and Christ their Lord the motive of it. So ended this memorable farewell discourse, which has been so fruitful in the guidance of the elders of the Church from that day to this. We shall not attempt to paraphrase or to summarise the touching words in which Luke, with sublime simplicity, describes the parting scene: "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more"²--words which, in the pure simplicity of the deep emotion they express, and in the pathos of the final farewell between Paul and his people which they set forth, can touch even our colder western natures, and compel our eyes to glisten with unshed tears, and our hearts to heave with the emotion we fear to show. It is one of the most pathetic scenes of Holy Writ, and the pathos is heightened by the simple words which follow: "And they brought him on his way to the ship."³

As we shall see later, it is probable that Paul was able once more to visit Ephesus in the interval between his first and second imprisonment at Rome; but this we merely mention at present, we shall discuss it more fully in its proper place.

The elders did not leave the shore until the ship had set sail, and with sad hearts they returned to Ephesus. The ship, with a fair wind, went with a straight course to Cos, and thence to Rhodes, and on the third day reached Patara on the coast of Lydia. There they found a ship loading for Tyre. Being pressed for time, they left the vessel which traded from port to port along the coast, and went aboard the ship which was about to sail straight for Phœnicia. They set sail, and leaving Cyprus on the left, they landed at Tyre. Paul

¹ Acts xx. 35.² Ibid. xx. 36-38.³ Ibid. xx. 38.

could see Cyprus as he was carried past it, and he must have thought of the time when with Barnabas he had laboured there. Memories of his work, and of the men with whom he had worked, and of all that had come and gone since then, must have thronged on him. Then he was at the beginning of his Apostolic work, now he had preached the gospel from Jerusalem to the Adriatic coast, and in every city there was a company of people, called, and chosen, and faithful, who were ready to follow whithersoever Christ led them. Amid all the cares and anxieties that weighed him down, and amid the uncertainties of the future, Paul must have been joyful as he recalled to mind the results of those momentous years. For he had succeeded in planting the gospel in many places, and many people had turned from idols to serve the living God.

At Tyre they were landed. It was a famous city, and full of interest, on account of its strange, eventful history. It was itself a mighty city, and the mother of other cities greater even than itself. Its story stretched back into the remote past, and touched the histories of all the ancient world-empires. Assyria, Babylon, Egypt were all in close relations with Tyre ; and it lays hold of the history of Israel in the closest way, specially in the times of Solomon and of Ahab. From the time of its siege and capture by Alexander the Great, its ancient glory was gone, and the Apostolic company must have thought of the oracles of the prophets when they trod its streets. It gives to Tyre a deeper interest when we remember that Christ had once come into its borders, and had that interview with the Syrophœnician woman recorded for us in the Gospels.¹ The good news which had come to her alone in the earthly ministry of our Lord, had now come to many in Phœnicia. For there was a Church at Tyre, dating from the time of the death of Stephen. We read that those scattered abroad upon the tribulation that rose about Stephen travelled as far as Phœnicia.² It was not one of the Churches founded by Paul, but his name was known, and his work acknowledged there. For seven days he stayed with them at Tyre. He found that he could now easily reach Jerusalem at the appointed time. He had no longer to take into account the uncertainty of a coasting voyage. He could easily calculate the time needed for the journey from Tyre to Jerusalem. The

¹ Mark vii. 24-30.

² Acts xi. 19.

Church at Tyre tried hard to dissuade him from the perilous journey. They knew well the feelings of the Jews and of the Judaizing Christians against him. They knew how daring, and unscrupulous, and cunning the Jews were, and they were aware that nothing would hinder them from attempting the life of the Apostle. This they knew from ordinary sources of information.

But they also had this knowledge from another and a higher source. The Spirit showed to his friends at Tyre that Paul must suffer many things at the hands of his countrymen, and the Spirit had shown to Paul also, that in every city "bonds and afflictions" awaited him. From this fact the Church at Tyre inferred that Paul ought not to go to Jerusalem, and Paul himself felt that he was bound to go, and to suffer, if need be, for the name of Christ, and for the sake of the gospel. It reminds one of the similar conflict between Luther and his friends as to the danger he should encounter if he appeared before the emperor. Paul resolved that he must go to Jerusalem, and his friends ceased to urge him to the contrary. After seven days they set out, and all the Christian community escorted them out of the city. The families of the congregation, husbands, wives, and children, accompanied the Apostolic company so far on their way, "and kneeling down on the beach, we prayed, and bade each other farewell; and we went on board the ship, but they returned home again."¹ It is of interest to note some things in this short paragraph. One thing is the recognition of the place and significance of the family within the Christian Church, and the permission granted to the children that they should be present when the congregation bade farewell to the Apostle; another thing is the attitude assumed in prayer by Paul and the congregation both here and at Miletus. We note these things and pass on.

From Tyre they sailed to Ptolemais, and there also they found some brethren, disciples of the Lord Jesus, and stayed a day with them; then the journey by sea came to an end, and next day, going round Carmel, they arrived at Cæsarea. Here Paul met with one who was an older Christian than himself; one who was a deacon and an evangelist while Paul was a persecutor of the Church. Philip was named next after Stephen in the narrative of the choosing and ordaining of the Seven, and

¹ Acts xxi. 6.

he is mentioned as the first to carry the gospel to the Samaritans, as he was also the first to receive a Gentile into the Church of Christ. How great an act of faith and courage was the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch we can realise only when we bear in mind the agitation and the long and bitter controversy which arose in connection with the conversion of the Gentiles and their reception into the Christian Church. May we not suppose that it was at Cæsarea that Luke became acquainted with the facts regarding Philip's ministry among the Samaritans, and his meeting with, and baptism of, the Ethiopian eunuch? Surely he would use this opportunity of making himself acquainted with all the facts he could find about the growth of Christianity, more especially if he were already gathering the materials for the history of the planting of the Church. He must indeed have already formed the purpose of writing the Gospel, and it is likely that during his residence in Jerusalem the Gospel took its final shape in his hands. He could not have spent the "many days" in the house of Philip at Cæsarea without making use of them to learn all that Philip and his daughters could tell him of the wondrous story of the increase of the Word of God.

The family of Philip the Evangelist followed in his steps, and took part in his work. They, too, bore their part in the preaching of the gospel. For the word "prophecy," used of the work and function of the daughters of Philip, does not mean so much the prediction of the future as the proclamation of the gospel and the pressing of its truths home to the heart and conscience of the people. The daughters of the Evangelist were themselves evangelists, as far as was possible for them. It was an active, lively, beautiful Christian home in which Paul and his companions dwelt during the many days of their stay at Cæsarea. It was a home also to which many Christians were wont to come, and to which they were always welcome. It was a place to which many came as they journeyed from Jerusalem to other cities in Syria, Asia Minor, or Europe. This appears from the visit of Agabus, who arrived from Judæa while Paul was staying with Philip. He is likely the same man whom Paul had met at Antioch long before, the man who had foretold the famine which had come to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar.¹ This famine it was that gave rise to the custom of making collections to help the saints at Jerusalem, the first

¹ Acts xi. 27.

systematic attempt at Christian organised liberality. Paul and Agabus were, therefore, old friends ; at all events, he was known to Paul long before Paul had met any other person of that company.

Agabus was a Jew, and imitated the symbolic action of the ancient prophets of Israel. It was usual for the prophets to set forth in some symbol the gist of the message they had to deliver. To walk barefoot, as Isaiah did ; to portray the siege of Jerusalem on a tile, or to cut off his hair, as Ezekiel did—not to mention other instances—were some of the ways in which the prophets sought to reach the heart of the people, quicken their fears, and arouse their conscience. So Agabus acts. He draws near to Paul, and takes his girdle. The girdle was the band used to gather the loose robe which Eastern people wear, and draw it together at the waist. It was large, and served not only to draw the loose robe tight round the waist, but also for the purpose of a pocket. With this girdle Agabus bound his own hands and legs. Knowing that he was a prophet, the company watched him with an interest heightened by fear. What can be the meaning of the mysterious movements and actions of the prophet? At length, when the action was complete, he spoke these words : “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”¹ This fell in with and intensified the impression already made on the minds of the friends of Paul, by the action of the Church at Tyre. The emotion became more intense, and found expression in entreaties that he would not go to Jerusalem. They besought him even with tears. It is a striking scene ; the prophet bound hand and foot with the girdle of the Apostle ; the friends of the Apostle, with tears in their eyes, and with voices broken in the utterance : and the Apostle himself, moved with intense feeling, sharing their emotion but not their hopelessness. At length he breaks forth into words : “What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”²

There are times in the history of every conscientious man when he himself alone is the proper judge of what he ought to do. Perhaps at such times his worst advisers are those who love him most. Because they love him, they are unwilling that

¹ Acts xxi. 11.

² Ibid xxi. 13.

he should face danger and incur risk. Or, if he must run the risk, let him take every precaution. How nobly is the situation set forth in Millais' picture of the Huguenot ! All the pleading face asks is, that he should tie the white badge around his arm, or let her tie it. But it cannot be, and he must be true to his own conviction of duty. So he goes forth to death because he can do no otherwise. Paul feels that he must go to Jerusalem. He is persuaded that his Master has called him there. It almost breaks his heart to see the distress of his friends, and yet he will not be persuaded. He must go to Jerusalem. Are we not reminded of One, a greater than Paul, even Paul's Master, who, knowing what awaited him at Jerusalem, yet steadfastly and resolutely made up His mind to go? He resisted the entreaty of His friends. He knew He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He was straitened till it was accomplished. Christ, too, felt the presence of the necessity that urged Him on, and He yielded to it, and He gladly gave Himself to duty, and drank the cup put to His lips by the Father's hand. His servant now, in a similar case, faces duty with a spirit that does not quail. He knows of the bonds and afflictions ; he is now told that he shall be made a prisoner ; but suffering and imprisonment, even death itself, can be borne, if Paul is persuaded that this is the way by which the Lord would have him walk. He is not only persuaded himself that he must go to Jerusalem ; he is able also to persuade others. "We ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."¹ They were bound to use every lawful means in order to save a life so precious as that of Paul. But there was a point at which their efforts should cease, and the point was reached when Paul declared what his conviction was. They came to know that he must be led in a way that they had not known, and that he must have the guidance of Christ in this resolute determination, from which no persuasion of theirs could turn him back. For them, as for Paul, the highest was to know what the Lord would have them to do. Once the will of the Lord is known, all struggle, all doubt should end, and the minds of men should rest in the thought that He who appoints both the suffering and the work, will also give the strength to bear, and the grace and wisdom to accomplish, His will.

So the matter was settled ; the brethren ceased to resist, and

¹ Acts xxi. 14.

Paul and his friends went up to Jerusalem. Some of the congregation at Cæsarea went with him. They were concerned as they thought of the risk run by Paul, and they were anxious also that he should have somewhere to lodge. One of them, however, who belonged to Cyprus, but who now had a house in Jerusalem, went with them, and it was arranged that Paul should stay with him. Mnason, we are told, was "an early disciple,"¹ perhaps one of those who had become a Christian on the day of Pentecost. It was necessary to secure a lodging beforehand. At the feast Jerusalem was full of people who came from all quarters. The kindness of Mnason removed all cause of anxiety from the minds of Paul and his friends, and they were set free to attend to other things, and truly they had many things to make them anxious and full of uneasiness. We feel sure that the calmest, easiest mind of all that company was that of Paul himself. His mind was made up; doubt and hesitation were at an end; he had simply to follow whither his Master led him; while the others were racked with anxiety on his behalf.

For the fifth and last time since his conversion, Paul is in Jerusalem. On various occasions, and for various purposes, he had visited that city. At every visit he had been pressed with much care, but never were the issues involved greater than on the present occasion. He had not now to win recognition for himself, or for his Apostolic office, or for the gospel he preached. But he had still to disarm the prejudices, and soften the keenness of the suspicions, aroused against him by the machinations of the Jewish party among the Christians. His name was honoured, and the greatness of his work recognised by all. But many false, or at least exaggerated, reports had been circulated about him, and these had to be set right. The brethren assembled at Mnason's house received them gladly. By the "brethren" is here meant, not a formal meeting of the Church of Jerusalem, but the friends of Mnason and of Paul, people, for the most part, of Paul's way of thinking, who had met to greet the Apostle on his arrival. Paul's visit gave no little anxiety to the heads of the Church at Jerusalem; they knew how keen was the feeling against him and his methods, and they feared lest some trouble should arise. But the matter must be faced. The next day Paul went to James. Luke was present at the

¹ Acts xxi. 16.

meeting, and gives us an account of what took place at it.¹ There is no mention of any of the Apostles, so it is not probable that any of them were present. Along with Paul were all those who had had a share in his labours, and along with James were all the authorities of the Jerusalem Church. James is he who had presided at the council, and who had drawn up the decree, which, for the time, had provided a *modus vivendi* between the Jewish and Gentile sections of the Church.

The first thing done by Paul and his friends was to "rehearse one by one the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry"² His rehearsal contained many things fitted to make glad the hearts of all those who believed in the Lord Jesus, and who cared for the salvation of men. It was a tale of continued progress, of fresh conquests, and of new cities won for Christ. Those to whom the report was given, received it with all thankfulness, and glorified God when they heard the glad tidings. We know not how much time was given to this great object. Paul's statement was sure to be long, for he had much to tell. It is sad to think that James and the elders should have been constrained to pass from the great topic of the conversion of the world to Christ, and come with all speed to the devising of measures by which they might avert the threatened trouble, and calm the disturbed minds of the party who suspected Paul. It is sad to think of how much time has been spent by Church assemblies from that day till now, in the unwelcome and weary task of healing divisions and averting ruptures. Regret becomes all the keener as we reflect on the temporary character and comparatively trifling importance of these causes of dispute. To confine ourselves, however, to the matter in hand, the matter which gave so much concern to the elders at Jerusalem was one which, within a brief period, was destined to trouble the Church no longer. Soon it will be a question without interest or practical importance to anybody, whether disciples of Christ should or should not conform to "the customs." It undoubtedly was a question of pressing urgency to the Church at Jerusalem. In it there were many extreme men, many zealous for the law, many who had not yet learned to distinguish between the temporary and permanent elements of the Old Testament dispensation. If the extreme men are very often the people who take the heaviest

¹ Acts xxi. 17.

² Ibid. xxi. 19.

share of work, they are also the men who usually give the Church most trouble. It is they also, who help in causing the Church to turn aside from the main stream of duty and of work, in order to try her temper and waste her strength on matters of little intrinsic importance.

Thus the Church at Jerusalem turned away from the account of glorious work among the Gentiles, to consider the trouble among themselves. They resolved to cast themselves on the generosity of Paul, and made an appeal to his forbearance. Their statement of the case was, both an excuse for the believing Jews, and also, in effect, a condemnation of the position they assumed. It was natural that Jews should still be zealous for the law, and that they should not feel that, by becoming Christians, they had ceased to be Jews. It would appear also that there was practical agreement among the believing Jews, of whom there were many thousands in Jerusalem and elsewhere. "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them which have believed; and they are all zealous for the law,"¹ so ran the opening words of their statement. It continued, "They have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs."² The historical situation is much more advanced than it was at the Council of Jerusalem. Then the question was, whether Gentiles were to be circumcised when they became Christians: the decision had then been given against the Jewish party, and they had seemingly ceased formally to resist it. Now what alarmed them is Paul's alleged practice of teaching Jews to forsake Moses, not to circumcise their children, nor to walk after the customs. Having yielded once, the Jewish party would not be likely to yield again. They were embittered also by the reports which had been persistently spread until they had come thoroughly to believe them. When news of Paul's intended visit had reached the Church at Jerusalem, all his adversaries had set to work, and had roused the prejudices of the people against him.

The charges against him were untrue, a gross exaggeration and perversion of the truth. He had taught the Gentile converts of the Corinthian Church—"Was any man called being

¹ Acts xxi. 20.

² Ibid. xxi. 21.

circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised ;”¹ that is, he allowed the Jews to maintain all their peculiarities. He would not permit them to force their peculiarities on other people. So he ordained in all the Churches. It may have been indeed that those Jews who had entered into and mastered Paul’s teaching on the relations of the law to the gospel may have considered themselves no longer bound to keep the customs. It was easy also to lay hold of the Apostle’s words to his Gentile converts, and to misrepresent them. It was easy to say that his statement, oft repeated, that “neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision,” justified the inference that Paul was bringing circumcision into contempt. If Paul’s principles were admitted, then indeed the rite of circumcision would soon fall away of itself. But Paul had not done anything violently or arbitrarily to hasten that result. Nay, as often as he had opportunity, and as far as possible, he had fallen in with Jewish customs. He was ready again to become a Jew to Jews, if he might win them.

They must arrange some plan of action ; for the multitude must come together, and before they came, the elders recommended to Paul such a course of action as would make it evident to Jewish Christians that he walked orderly “keeping the law.”² He was to take part in the ceremonies of a Nazarite vow. There were four men who had a vow on them, and Paul was asked to purify himself with them, and bear the charges which these men were bound to pay. To the thing in itself Paul could have had no objection. For but recently he had himself made a vow, and had observed the appointed ceremonial. Along with this recommendation to Paul, the elders and James reaffirmed the decree of the Council of Jerusalem, and expressly stated that the Gentiles were free from the observance of the Mosaic law, only “that they should keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled, and from fornication. Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself with them, went into the temple, declaring the fulfilment of the days of purification, until the offering was offered for every one of them.”³ This well-meant concession to prejudice was destined to have no effect. The multitude never came together, Paul had no opportunity of explaining to the mass of the congregation what his practice and principles really were, nor had they any oppor-

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 18.² Acts xxi. 24.³ Ibid. xxi. 25, 26.

tunity of giving their view. The matter was taken out of the hands of Paul, of James and the elders, and of the congregation alike, and the question which troubled them was never to have an answer. Thus we may leave the advice of the elders and Paul without further discussion.

CHAPTER XII.

IN JERUSALEM AND CÆSAREA.

The Apostle assaulted by Asiatic Jews—Rescued by Claudius Lysias—Speech from the castle stairs—The Apostle claims his rights as a Roman citizen—Before the Sanhedrin—Incidents—The Apostle in imprisonment—His state of mind—Plot against him—His removal to Cæsarea—Trial before Felix—Intercourse with Felix—Procrastination of Felix.

THE seven days during which the Nazarite must avoid all persons and places which would cause ceremonial defilement were almost ended, when all at once that plan was brought to an abrupt conclusion. There were certain Jews from Asia present at the feast ; they knew Paul and his work. Perhaps they were of those who had opposed him in Ephesus, and had come to Jerusalem for the same purpose. They must have come recently from Asia ; for they knew that Trophimus was an Ephesian and a Gentile. We see also that Trophimus, who had been of Paul's company from Troas to Ephesus, had accompanied him to Jerusalem. These Jews of Asia, finding Paul in the temple, and having seen him in the company of Trophimus in the city a few days before, rushed to the conclusion that he had brought Trophimus into the temple. To have been with Trophimus at all and to eat with him and dwell in the same house with him, as they thought Paul had done, was itself a grave offence in the eyes of a strict Jew. To have brought this Gentile friend into the temple was simply sacrilege. Furious with excitement and rage, they shouted, " Men of Israel, help : This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place : and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled

this holy place.”¹ The form of the outcry makes it plain that these Jews of Asia had already made the fact of Paul’s visit, and the kind of work he had done in Asia, somewhat widely known. They had told what they had witnessed of his doings in Ephesus and elsewhere. He had brought the people into contempt, and he had crowned his career of wrong-doing by desecrating the temple.

They stirred up the people, laid violent hands on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple. The whole city was in commotion, and history tells what the excitement of a Jerusalem riot was like. Even in their frenzy and excitement they respected the temple, and their violence was measured until they got beyond its precincts. The authorities were on the alert, and as soon as the multitude were outside they promptly shut the gates, that the temple might suffer no profanation from the riot already begun. The Apostle was in imminent danger. He was in the hands of a multitude eager to put him to death, and the fate of the first martyr was likely to be also the fate of him, who as a young man had witnessed his murder and approved it. But his time was not yet: he had some more work to do.

“Tidings came up to the chief captain of the band that all Jerusalem was in confusion.”² The messenger who brought the news had not far to go. The chief captain of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem was stationed in the tower of Antonia, which was on the north-west of the temple. He was thus in the best position for the proper supervision of the city. We know from the Gospels how anxious the Jewish authorities were to avoid all causes of popular excitement during the feasts. “Not on the feast-day lest there be an uproar among the people.” The Roman authorities shared that anxiety. For at the feast religious feeling ran high, and the people would be very prompt to resent anything like profanation of the temple, or what might be construed into disrespect of its services. The chief captain, with haste that shows he had been prepared, forthwith took soldiers and centurions and ran down with them. He came just in time. Those who had dragged Paul out of the temple were deliberately seeking to kill him, and already they had maltreated him severely. The arrival of the Roman soldiers put an end to the beating of Paul.

¹ Acts xxi. 28.

² Ibid. xxi. 31.

Immediately Paul was arrested, and was ordered to be bound with two chains. Then it was demanded who he was and what he had done. No definite answer was given. There was noise enough ; for some shouted one thing and some another ; possibly most of those present had nothing definite to say, so they shouted all the louder ; they could know nothing of the reason why the clamour was raised. The chief captain could make nothing of it, and he commanded Paul to be brought into the castle. As he was brought to the stairs which led from the temple and up to the tower of Antonia, he had to be carried by the soldiers ; for the people, filled with rage as they saw him borne beyond their reach, pressed riotously on the soldiers. They shouted "away with him," the cry which they had formerly shouted as vehemently against Paul's Lord and Master. Some of the soldiers had to keep the people back from the stairs, while their comrades lifted him and placed him beyond the reach of the multitude.

No danger could disturb Paul's presence of mind ; suddenly grasped and dragged out of the temple, beaten by the angry people, hurried breathless up the castle stairs, one would naturally suppose him to be in a state unfit for further exertion. After all he had suffered at the hands of his countrymen, and after all his experience of their obduracy, he yet did not despair of them. He is ready to try once more. If he could only reach their hearts, and persuade them that their Messiah had indeed come. He spoke to the chief captain, rather to the captain's surprise. The chief captain thought he had to do with the Egyptian who had stirred the people to sedition, "and had led out into the wilderness the four thousand men of the Assassins."¹ We need not describe the Assassins ; a full account of their rise and character is given by Josephus.² Enough to say, that they were one of the worst signs of that tendency to utter lawlessness and universal disorder which culminated in Jerusalem during the siege, and manifested itself fully during that revolt which was so sharply put down by Hadrian.

The chief captain was surprised that Paul could speak Greek. He had the notion that Paul was that noted offender, the Egyptian, and it would appear that the Egyptian could not speak Greek. Paul's answer is brief and to the point. He

¹ Acts xxi. 38.

² "Wars of the Jews," ii. 13, 3.

does not take the trouble of denying that he was "that Egyptian." He simply says, "I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city,"¹ and asks leave to speak unto the people. Leave is granted to him, and Paul standing on the temple stairs has at last the opportunity of speaking to the gathered thousands of his nation, in the city of Jerusalem. The multitude is before him, near enough to hear all he has to say. The Roman soldiers are below him, at the foot of the stairs, facing the multitude and keeping them back, and above them stands Paul and the chief captain, who have had their brief conversation together. Paul beckoned with his hand, thus showing that his hand was free. Either the command of the chief captain that Paul should be bound with two chains had not been carried out, or he had been so impressed with Paul's conversation as to free his right hand from the chain. Surprise held the people silent. They were astonished that he should desire to speak to them. The silence deepened as his voice reached them speaking words of their ancient mother tongue. The people made no movement, and Paul spoke his defence.

His defence is the story of his life, and particularly the story of his conversion. He tells them what his life had been, of his persecution of the Christians, of the commission he had received from the Jewish authorities to persecute the Christians in Damascus. He tells them of his conversion. He gives time and place and circumstance. Then he tells them that he was constrained to recognise the right of Christ to dispose of his life, and to appoint him his work. It was Christ who had told him that the Jews would not hear his testimony, and it was Christ who had sent him to the Gentiles. It is a speech quite characteristic of the Apostle. We notice the grand assumption which none but an innocent and conscientious man would make, that a statement of his history would be sufficient to clear him from every possible charge. It was Paul's usual mode of defence. He knew that he could explain why he had become a Christian, and why he had preached Christ unto the Gentiles. His one explanation was Christ, and the command of Christ. One point deserves notice: it was brought back to Paul's mind by the place where he stood, and is, when rightly viewed, a remarkable confirmation of the authenticity of his

¹ Acts xxi. 39.

speech. He remembers that it was in this very temple, at the solemn moment of prayer, that the Lord of him and of the temple had commanded him to go to the Gentiles. It was both a vindication of his own conduct and a subtle, indirect appeal to them who revered the temple. He who had come to the temple to pray was not likely to profane the temple, or to think lightly of it. And then it showed also that Christ, the Crucified One, could use the temple and walk with His servant in it. Thus prayer in the temple was made the occasion of a new departure, the issue of which was to supersede the temple. But the reverence for the temple, which was felt both by Paul and by his hearers, was for the moment a bond of union between them.

He held them as long as he could. He brought forward at the outset only those things which were least likely to offend them, but he must come to the parting of the ways. He must speak the word they hated. No sooner had he spoken the word "Gentiles" than their feelings broke loose; they could no longer restrain themselves. A howl of execration arose; they cried "away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live."¹ Their emotion must somehow find vent. They could not endure the interference with the freedom of movement caused by the loose upper robe they wore. Violent emotion must find relief in physical action; that they might be free to move they must cast off their garments. This was almost the first action of a Jewish crowd when they grew excited. But along with this came the symbolic action, by which they signified their utter detestation of Paul and his views. They cast dust into the air, nay, even cast it at Paul. They could not reach nor injure him, but their powerless rage fed on itself and grew from more to more. Their cry and their symbolic action show what they would have done to him if they had only had the power.

The scene was ended by Paul's removal. The chief captain ordered him to be brought into the castle. He could not understand what Paul had said to the people, and therefore could not know the cause of their sudden excitement. Paul must have said something very offensive indeed to make them shout at him so. The chief captain orders that Paul shall be examined by scourging. With the skill that comes from use the Roman

¹ Acts xxii. 22.

soldiers did the bidding of their captain. They tied him up with the thongs, stretching his body forward that it might be in a fit position to receive the scourge. As he was being thus tied up, Paul said to the centurion, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a Roman, and uncondemned?"¹ It was a rare thing for a man to lay claim to Roman citizenship, if he did not really possess the privilege. To make such a claim was a grave offence, and one which was visited with the most severe penalties. To make a false claim would make a prisoner's case a great deal worse. Knowing these things the centurion at once believed Paul, and went immediately to the chief captain. For all the soldiers, and specially the officers, would receive blame if they scourged a Roman citizen. So with some abruptness the centurion bluntly said, "What art thou about to do? for this man is a Roman."² The chief captain came to make inquiry. "Tell me, art thou a Roman? and he said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this citizenship. And Paul said, But I am a Roman born."³ It gives one a high conception of the might and majesty of Roman law, when we find that the claim of Roman citizenship, once made and acknowledged, was sufficient to stay the hands of the chief captain and his soldiers. They did not pause nor hesitate, but at once recognised the limit set to their power; and those who were about to scourge him, made haste to untie the thongs and to set him free. They departed from him as if ashamed. The chief captain also was afraid. Not only did he cease from the attempt to scourge Paul, but he was alarmed when he thought that he had ordered a Roman citizen to be bound to the post to which criminals were tied for the purpose of scourging. It is good to recognise here the grand function of Roman law, and the moral restraint it laid on physical force. In truth, outside of Christianity there is nothing grander in human history than the great impartial legal system of Rome; in itself and in its influence, a mighty factor in the preparation of the nations for something greater than itself which in the fulness of time was to come.

The chief captain was conscious that he had made a mistake, and, anxious that justice should be done, set Paul free from his bonds and brought him before the Sanhedrin. He had come to know that Paul had somehow done something to offend the

¹ Acts xxii. 25.² Ibid. xxii. 26.³ Ibid. xxii. 27-28.

religious feelings of the Jews. Desiring to know the truth, he summoned the religious authorities of the Jews to a meeting, and brought Paul before them. As his Master had stood before the Sanhedrin, as Peter and John and Stephen had stood before them, so Paul now stands. The similarity in the circumstances was great, but so also was the difference. Paul had been trained as his judges were ; he knew as well as they did the law they professed to administer ; he had been one of themselves, and could measure and understand their feelings and their prejudices. For he had been a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and had been filled with the same religious zeal, and had shared the same religious feeling of intolerance. Like them also he had led a strict and blameless outward life, and had given himself to a serious study of the traditions of the fathers. But he has been changed, and because of the change he is a prisoner before them. Another difference is that he is here under the protection of Roman law. They cannot commit him to prison as they had done to Peter ; nor can the crowd, impelled by religious hatred, hurry him to death as they hurried Stephen. He can speak with some freedom. He will speak not as a prisoner, but as an equal to equals. Looking steadfastly at the council, he began, "Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day."¹ It is impossible to say whether these were the very words which Paul said, or whether they are the only words he was allowed to speak. It is possible that he was allowed to speak one sentence and no more. It is possible also that Luke preserves for us that sentence which appeared to him to arouse the anger of the high priest. It seems to us, however, that the first view is the more probable, and that we have the exact words, and the only words Paul was permitted to speak. Why should they have aroused the anger of the high priest? Possibly because of the tone and manner of his speech, as that of an equal unto equals ; possibly also because of the familiar word "brethren" with which he began, as if he had not recognised the high and authoritative character of the assembly before which he stood. His protest that he had lived before God in all good conscience, itself only a plea of not guilty, could not have aroused the anger of the high priest. It must have been the manner, rather than the matter of his address, which brought upon him the rebuke of the high priest.

¹ Acts xxiii. 1.

Be this as it may, we have in the conduct of the high priest an illustration of how judicial power ought not to be exercised. And when Ananias ordered him to be smitten on the mouth, he exceeded his authority as a judge. What is more to be regretted is that his violence led to equal violence on the part of Paul, and to one of those exhibitions of infirmity on his part, which make us feel how much his character and his conduct come short of the character and conduct of his Master. Irritated and offended at the command of the high priest, Paul says, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall ; for sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law."¹ All we shall say here is that this is not like the conduct of Him who left us an example that we should follow His steps, "Who when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, threatened not."² The words may be justified, for the high priest sat as the minister of justice, and had acted unjustly ; but none the less may we regret that the Apostle used them. The bystanders interfered ; "Revilest thou God's high priest," they asked. Ewald calls attention to the language they use : "Nothing shows so strongly the stage which the development had then reached as the term *the high priest of God* ; an expression of a nature much more presumptuous than occurs in earlier times than those before us."³ As the religious character of a priesthood diminishes their religious pretensions and claims increase. The two are usually in inverse proportion to one another. Paul, in answer, tells them of his regret and assures them that he would not have spoken so had he known he was high priest. He was ready to show submission to the ruler of his people. It appears that the high priest might preside at the meeting of the Sanhedrin without distinctive costume. Ananias had been appointed to the office since Paul had ceased to be a resident at Jerusalem, and was thus personally unknown to Paul ; at all events, Paul had not known that the command to smite him had proceeded from the high priest. He expresses his sorrow and regret for the words he had used.

Then matters took a strange turn. "Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees."⁴ There

¹ Acts xxiii. 3

² 1 Pet. ii. 23.

³ "History of Israel," vol. vii. p. 435. Note 2.

⁴ Acts xxiii. 6.

was no love lost between the two, for they were antagonistic to each other in their beliefs, hopes, fears, aims, and conduct. Though compelled to meet together in the Sanhedrin, most likely they would sit apart, and any one who knew both, could readily enough tell, from dress and demeanour, which were Sadducees, and which were Pharisees. From the short account which Luke gives us, we feel that we do not know all the circumstances, nor the precise way in which, nor the purpose for which Paul raised the question of the resurrection. He wished to have an opportunity of setting forth the certainty of the resurrection, and more particularly that great doctrine of Christianity, the resurrection of Christ. He may have hoped that the avowal of his being a Pharisee, and of his being a son of Pharisees, would induce the Pharisees, to give him a patient hearing. We feel persuaded that his intention was not to cast a bone of contention among his judges. It is true that he had beliefs which the Pharisees also held. He and they • believed in the resurrection of the dead. It is true also that he had little or nothing in common with the Sadducees, who were mainly a political, aristocratic, worldly party, whose main interest lay in keeping things as they were. Paul and they were utterly opposed, and with them he could have no sympathy. May not his hope have been to win those who believed in a resurrection to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

The result of his statement "touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question"¹ was to divide the assembly. Sadducee and Pharisee alike forgot Paul and the case in hand, and set themselves to discuss the questions about angels, spirits, and the resurrection, on which both sides would have a great deal to say. From these questions they turned to think of Paul in the light of what he had just said. His statement made the Sadducees more indignant with him. They had ever been hostile to Christianity, and had been the first to take action against it. And now they are angry not only with Paul, but with the Pharisees also. Then, again, the Pharisees seem to be divided into a section more opposed to Paul, and a section which thought there ought to be further inquiry. These were "the Scribes of the Pharisees' part," who seem not to have forgotten either the teaching or the advice of Gamaliel. They plainly said that they could find no fault in him. "We find no

¹ Acts xxiii. 6.

evil in this man ; and what if a spirit hath spoken to him or an angel?"¹ It would be well to inquire into the matter, and ascertain what the spirit or the angel had really said. The confusion was great, and grew greater every moment. Everybody spoke at once. The dignity of a judicial court was quite forgotten, and the highest authorities of the Jews, in whom all spiritual power was vested, behaved in the most unseemly way. It was time to end the matter. The chief captain, who had been present all the time, in fear lest Paul should be torn in pieces by them, led him back for safety to the castle. The judges were far from being agreed, and the Apostle, though still a prisoner, had won a substantial victory.

These events must, however, have been a great discouragement to him. They dispelled any lingering hopes he may have had of conciliating the Jews. He had undertaken the Nazarene vow in vain. Though downcast, the Apostle, with that power of making the best of the existing situation so characteristic of him, began to think of other plans. Again it has been made plain to him that he can do no work for Christ in Jerusalem. As in a former instance, so now, the Lord appeared to him, and caused him to hope that this thing might also be for the furtherance of the gospel. The Lord had not forsaken him. He stood by him, and commanded him to be of good cheer. "As thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."² He had oftentimes purposed to go to Rome,³ but could never find the opportunity. For some time he had firmly resolved that he must see Rome, and there bear testimony to Christ and His salvation. Now in a most unexpected way, the visit to Rome becomes possible. Paul may not yet know the precise manner in which he shall reach Rome, but the Master tells him that the way will be found. Thus Paul is comforted and made strong to bear the enforced inaction of the time of his imprisonment.

While the Apostle was thus receiving strength from Christ to bear the disappointment, and to hope for the future, the Jews were very differently occupied. Some of them banded themselves together, "and bound themselves under a curse saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul."⁴ It was a

¹ The Revised Version rightly omits the phrase, "Let us not fight against God" (Acts xxiii. 9).

² Ibid. xxiii. 11.

³ Rom. i. 13.

⁴ Acts xxiii. 14.

great vexation to them that they had been thwarted in their purpose. The sudden onset of the Roman soldiers had taken the Apostle out of their power. But they were resolved to kill him, and to kill him speedily. The kind of oath they took shows how much in earnest they were. They invoked the vengeance of God on themselves if they failed to keep their vow, and they bound themselves to abstain from food and drink till it was accomplished. Such vows were not uncommon among the Zealots of the period. The number of those who bound themselves was more than forty. Their plan was exceedingly simple. Their difficulty was to get within reach of the Apostle. He was in the castle, safe under the guardianship of the Roman soldiers. If on some pretence he could be brought again into the presence of the people, then a band of resolute men might be able to kill him. True, indeed, many of them might lose their lives in the attempt. But they were in that state of excited and angry feeling, which caused them freely to risk their lives, and if necessary to throw their life away. The conspirators sought the help of the chief priests and elders. They went to the chief priests and elders, frankly told them what they purposed to do, and said "do ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you, as though ye would judge of his case more exactly ; and we, or ever he come near, are ready to slay him." ¹ We do not know the reception given by the chief priests and elders to this proposal. We know that neither the Sadducees nor the Pharisees were very scrupulous. Still they may have hesitated to aid and help in the commission of direct murder. If it could be done under form of law, or if it were done in a sudden tumult of the people, they would have rejoiced at the removal of Paul. But to plot beforehand and act with a view to such a crime, was, we may well believe, a thing they could not do. A certain sense of responsibility clings to all exercise of authority.

The conspirators apparently took no pains to hide their plot. They counted on the silence of the Jews. They were sure that no Jew would tell the Romans of it. But news of it came to Paul's sister's son, and he immediately made it known to Paul. As the Apostle was in custody not for a crime, but for safety, his friends had free access to him, and no doubt many of them

¹ Acts xxiii. 15.

had come to him during these days of imprisonment.¹ As soon as Paul heard of the conspiracy he resolved to make it known to the chief captain. He called a centurion, and asked him to bring his nephew to the chief captain, who, informed of the plot, and seeing how serious was the state of matters thus revealed, resolved to send Paul to Cæsarea, for he was responsible both for the life of the prisoner and for the peace of the city. Charging the young man to keep the matter secret, he made rapid preparations for the journey, and on the same night sent Paul away under a strong guard. The rapidity of the preparation, the secrecy with which it was done, and the strength of the guard, reveal to us the estimate the chief captain had formed of the gravity of the crisis. Had the Jews heard of the proposed expedition, or had the guard been less strong, an attack might have been made by them on the party. Every precaution was therefore taken. The soldiers, with Paul, set out at the third hour of the night; and guarded by two hundred soldiers, two hundred spearmen, and seventy horsemen, he travelled all night, and reached Antipatris. From this place the soldiers and spearmen returned to Jerusalem, and the horsemen conducted Paul to Cæsarea, and handed him over to Felix, the Roman governor. Antipatris was about fifty-two miles from Jerusalem, and about twenty-six from Cæsarea.

The chief captain sent with them a letter to Felix, to explain the steps he had taken and the reasons why he had taken them. The letter was probably written in Latin, and Luke gives us the substance of it in Greek. As the letter would be read in open court, a copy of it could easily be procured by Luke. Claudius tells how the prisoner was rescued by him from great danger, how he sought to find out of what he was accused, how he found he had committed no crime, and how he found that Paul was in great danger from the hatred of the Jews; he, therefore, had sent him to Felix. The question, he explains, was one about the Jewish law. He felt that this was a matter not for him, but for the chief governor of the province. Claudius concludes by stating that he has charged the accusers of Paul to appear before the governor, in order to make good the charges they had brought against Paul. Felix, thus suddenly brought

¹ The margin of the Revised Version (Acts xxiii. 16) has a reading which suggests the way in which Paul's sister's son made discovery of the plot—"he heard of their lying in wait, having come in upon them."

before us in the Acts of the Apostles, had been procurator of Judæa since the year 53 A.D. He was not a man of high character. On the contrary, he was cruel as a ruler, and in his personal conduct was mean, impure, and profligate. He continued to hold office in Judæa for two years after Paul was brought to Cæsarea, and during that time Paul was kept prisoner.

By the action of Claudius Lysias the situation at Jerusalem was changed. Both parties in the Sanhedrin, which had been disunited for the moment, had now again agreed in opposition to Paul. However much they were opposed to each other, their common opposition to Paul was much greater. Knowing as they did the character of Felix, they did not expect to meet much difficulty in procuring from him a sentence unfavourable to Paul. They were all the more earnest in this, as they had come to know that Paul was the most energetic, most able, and most zealous of all the Christian leaders. By his removal they might hope to strike a deadly blow at Christianity itself. It seemed to them that they should leave no stone unturned to gain their end. It was an occasion which demanded the presence of the high priest himself. All parties in the Sanhedrin were now agreed that they should be influentially represented at the trial of Paul, and they deliberately constructed the charge against him, and employed an advocate—an orator, one Tertullus—to set forth the charge with all possible skill. Meanwhile Paul had been brought before Felix. The questions put to him by the governor were mainly formal. He asked him of what province he was, and having been answered, he deferred the further hearing of the case until the accusers had come. Paul was kept a prisoner in Herod's palace. Most likely this was the palace which Herod had erected for himself, now used as the residence of the Roman governor.

After five days the trial began. The high priest and his company had come, with their advocate; and it would seem, at first in private, "they informed the governor against Paul."¹ At length Paul is brought forth, and stands face to face with his accusers. Tertullus, chosen because of his skill in Roman law, steps forward to state the case, and to make the accusation. The gist of the accusation is that Paul was a person dangerous to the Roman power, and

¹ Acts xxiv. 1.

not merely offensive to the Jews. It is only a summary of the speech which Luke records. The fulsome and servile flatteries of the governor need not detain us. The charges run thus, "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes : who moreover assayed to profane the temple."¹ The sum of it all was that Paul was a disturber of the public peace, and a bad man. When Tertullus had finished, the Jews joined in the charge and testified to the truth of the accusation.

It was now the turn of Paul. He made his defence with great dignity and self-possession, and easily disposed of all the points made against him. He begins with a reference to the governor, gracefully given and at the same time true altogether to fact. Felix had been for many years a judge unto the Jews, and his knowledge of the Jews and their customs would enable him to judge regarding the truth of Paul's statements. He knew that the feasts brought many foreign Jews to Jerusalem. He might easily learn that it was not more than twelve days since Paul had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and that "neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man, or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city."² As for proof of these statements the prosecutor had none to offer, at least no such proof as the law required. We quote his own words—"But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets ; having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust. Herein do I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and man alway. Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings ; amidst which they found me purified in the temple, with no crowd, nor yet with tumult ; but there were certain Jews from Asia, who ought to have been here before thee, and to make accusation if they had aught against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrong doing they found, when I stood before the council, except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question this day."³ The reply was

¹ Acts xxiv. 5-8.² Ibid. xxiv. 12.³ Ibid. xxiv. 14-21.

triumphant. He had overthrown the contentions of the practised orator one by one. He had shown how blameless his conduct had been in Jerusalem, how innocent was the motive which had brought him to Jerusalem, and how far his adversaries were from having proved anything against him. Paul's skilful defence made Felix understand that a condemnation was impossible. Paul had not even been accused of a violation of Roman law. The right course for Felix would have been to dismiss the case. He was unwilling to do so, as it would have offended the Jews, and he took the middle course of deferring a decision till Lysias should arrive.

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM CÆSAREA TO ROME.

Captivity at Cæsarea—Felix—His character and motives—His recall—
Festus and his treatment of the Apostle—Trial before King Agrippa
—Appeal unto Cæsar—Sent to Rome—Incidents of the voyage—Ship-
wrecked at Malta—Incidents at Malta.

THE trial had come to an end, to the satisfaction of no one concerned. The Jews were dissatisfied, as they had not obtained the condemnation of Paul; and he had good reason for complaining that but scanty justice had been meted out to him. That a man should, untried and uncondemned, be kept in prison for years, indicates a manifest failure of justice. The Jews practically gained their end, for they had got him removed from active life, who had been so active and successful in propagating the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. Imprisonment, with every indulgence compatible with its maintenance, was the measure meted out to Paul by Felix. His friends were allowed to see him, and neither the Church at Cæsarea, nor Philip the Evangelist would be likely to forget him. From the language used by Luke we may infer that his friends did come to minister unto him. Felix, too, seemed to have been not unfriendly, and was accustomed to commune much with him. One conversation is narrated in outline by the historian. Felix and his wife Drusilla sent for Paul on an early day, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. Drusilla was a Jewess, a daughter of that King Agrippa whose sudden death is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.¹ She must have known something of the Christians, if for no other reason than because

¹ xii. 23.

of the way in which the Christian cause was associated with her father's death. She was six years old when her father died. Her marriage with a Gentile and a Roman proves that she was by no means a strict or patriotic Jewess.

There is something very like irony in the account we have of the interview, and of the subject of conversation. Felix, like other Romans, had some interest in, and liked to know something of the beliefs of other peoples. Eastern beliefs, particularly those of Syria and Egypt, had a strange fascination for the practical Roman mind. The old faith of Rome had crumbled, and the formal worship of the Roman state as embodied in the emperor was rapidly becoming the official religion of the empire. The Romans were a people in search of a religion ; and Felix had heard in Paul's statement in defence of himself some things which whetted his curiosity and made him desirous of hearing more. Perhaps he had noted the words used by Paul, and the strangeness of them to Roman ears might have struck him. Paul had spoken of "the way," and of the resurrection of the dead. What could "the way" mean, and what was the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection, and wherein did it differ from the usual philosophical speculations as to a future life? Felix may have expected some abstract discussion, or some Eastern parallel to such writings as are contained in the philosophical works of Cicero. At all events he does not seem to have got from Paul what he desired. For Paul could never have lost himself in an abstract discussion, or have permitted himself ever to lose sight of conduct. He no doubt did tell Felix of the faith in Christ, that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that Jesus was the Messiah expected of the Jews. Paul would not leave the governor ignorant of the faith in Christ Jesus.

But this faith issued in conduct. It was not one on which men might dwell in a merely logical and speculative manner. It was intensely practical. In Paul's hands it became a reasoning "of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come"¹; the three qualities which were conspicuously absent from the life and conduct of Felix. Here is the irony of the situation. Felix expected to gratify an intellectual curiosity. He found himself in the grasp of one who aroused his conscience, brought his sin and misconduct to remembrance, and filled him with a serious fore-

¹ Acts xxiv. 25.

boding and anxiety as to the judgment to come. Felix trembled as in the presence of his judge. The positions were reversed ; the governor is the person who trembles at the bar of conscience, and the prisoner has become the judge, with steady hand holding the scales of justice, and with clear voice proclaiming the stern, inflexible principles on which the world is governed, and by which all men must finally be tried. He trembled, and did no more. His trembling did not lead to repentance, no, not even to the discharge of the plain obvious duty of setting the prisoner free.

All that Felix did was to rid himself of the immediate occasion of his trembling. He sent Paul away. He was ashamed of himself, and of his terror. He did make a sort of apology for sending him away, and a kind of promise to resume the conversation. In the absence of Paul his spirits assumed their wonted tone, and his trembling passed away. He never found the convenient season of which he spoke. Though he often conversed with Paul, yet the time when he could tremble passed away never to return. There is something unutterably sad in the conduct of the man, who immediately after he has trembled at the thought of eternal righteousness and final judgment, should plan and hope to sell justice for money. He continues to send for the Apostle, and to talk with him, but his motive now is not to learn of Christ, nor to listen to the Apostle's reasoning, but to get Paul to influence the Christians to pay his ransom. There was no change in the conduct of Felix. For two years he kept Paul a prisoner, and at the end of his period of government left Paul in bonds. This he did in order to gain favour with the Jews. He knew how angry the Jews were with him, and he dreaded the effect of the charges they might bring against him after his recall. Thus he sought in various ways to make merchandise of the Apostle. Had he been bribed, he would have released Paul. Since Paul would not bribe him, he withdrew from him all the favour with which he had treated him, and by leaving him in bonds, naturally gave to his successor the impression that Paul was a criminal. But the Jews did not relax their efforts. They brought their charges against him before Nero, and Felix narrowly escaped punishment. Of his future life history has no record.

History is silent also with regard to Paul, and the thoughts of Paul, during these two years. It must have been hard for him

to reconcile himself to this time of inactivity. How the care of the Churches must have occupied his thoughts, and have burdened him all the more on account of his enforced absence from them. He could not have been idle, but we need not conjecture, for we shall never know. There is no record of any deed of his, nor of any letter from his pen.

The two years came to an end. A new governor is come, and new measures must be taken. Festus came to Cæsarea. "Having entered upon his province, he, three days after, went up to Jerusalem."¹ He was in haste to acquaint himself with the principal city in his province, as Jerusalem had been the chief source of anxiety to all the governors, from the days when it became part of a Roman province. On his arrival at Jerusalem the chief priests and the principal men informed him against Paul. It was a legal charge that they brought against him. We gain a new insight into the depth of the Jewish hatred against Paul, and their pertinacity, when we reflect that for two years they had kept their eye on Paul, and brought their charges against him on the first opportunity. Now the chief priests themselves purpose to do what the forty conspirators had formerly proposed to them. They want to get rid of Paul by any means, fair or foul. They ask Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem. They intended to kill him by the way. Their hatred to Paul had evidently grown during these years, and the longer they waited the more they thirsted for his life. But Festus would not listen to their proposal. He replied, "that Paul was kept in charge at Cæsarea, and that he himself was about to depart thither shortly."² He invited the accusers of Paul to come to Cæsarea, and promised them a fair hearing of the case. The invitation is somewhat peculiar. "Let them, therefore, which are of power among you go down with me;"³ such men of influence and authority as would fitly represent the accusers.

Some eight or ten days thereafter he went down to Cæsarea, and on the day after his arrival he summoned Paul before him. He who, untried and uncondemned, had already suffered imprisonment so long, is tried by a new governor, and again he fails to obtain justice. The boasted impartiality of Roman law again failed, owing to the weakness of those to whom its administration was entrusted. The accusers brought many

¹ Acts xxv. 1. Revised Version margin.

² Acts xxv. 4.

³ Acts xxv. 5.

grievous charges against him, but they had no evidence to prove them. Paul steadfastly maintained his innocence. More curtly than before, and with a touch of impatience in his tone, he says, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Cæsar have I sinned at all."¹ Clearly Festus was of opinion that the charge had broken down, at least as far as regards Roman law. But might there not be something in the other charges? Festus knew nothing of the Jewish law, and but little of Jewish customs. He suggests that Paul might be tried at Jerusalem. "Wilt thou go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?"² He wished to gain the favour of the Jews, and perhaps he really felt himself to be helpless and unfit to judge the case. The impatience of the Apostle grew greater. Delay had already tired him, and almost worn him out. And there is a ring of manly indignation in the words which he spake: "I am standing before Cæsar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged; to the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest. If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of these things is true whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar."³

The fateful words are spoken. The Apostle, wearied of the endless delays, and of the insincerity both of Felix and of Festus, is constrained to make the appeal which takes him and the case out of their hands, and places them in the hands of the Emperor himself. For years he had waited in patience, but he could endure no more when he saw that Festus was following the example of his predecessor, and was seeking "to do the Jews a pleasure." The Apostle will be no party to such continued malversation of justice. Nor is his appeal one that can be disregarded. It paralysed the hands of Festus, and constrained him to yield. He took the opinion of his assessors, and they seemingly agreed that Paul's appeal must have effect. So the governor said: "Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? Unto Cæsar shalt thou go."⁴

Some time elapsed before Paul could be sent to Rome. Nor was the governor in any haste to send him. For he was in a somewhat awkward position. A man had been kept in prison

¹ Acts xxv. 8.

² Ibid. xxv. 9.

³ Ibid. xxv. 10, 11.

⁴ Ibid. xxv. 12.

for years, and at last had appealed unto Cæsar, and the governor had great difficulty in stating the charge against him. Festus seems to have felt keenly the difficulty, and to have feared lest he should be blamed by the Emperor. To be found partial or careless in the administration of justice at the beginning of his term of office might have serious consequences. He seized the occasion of a visit of King Agrippa and Bernice, to lay the matter before the King. The King, being acquainted with Jewish ways of thinking, and Jewish customs, and himself also bearing the burden of rule over the Jews, might be able to advise. It is not necessary to say anything of this King and his sister, nor to relate what has been said of them both by Jewish and by Roman writers. The story of the Herods is, from first to last, one about which as little as possible should be written. After they had been at Cæsarea for some time Festus brought the case of Paul before the King. He states that Paul had been left in bonds by Felix, that the Jews had, when Festus had been at Jerusalem, asked for sentence against him. It was not the Roman custom to condemn a man without a trial, and the trial had been held. But Festus found no charge of crime had been made. It was a question about the Jews' religion, about "one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."¹ In his perplexity the governor had proposed to shift the trial to Jerusalem, and let the prisoner be judged there, but Paul had appealed to Cæsar. He was now in safe keeping till a fitting opportunity of sending him should be found. On this statement being made, King Agrippa said, "I also could wish to hear the man myself."² The hearing was fixed for the next day.

With the fondness for display characteristic of the house of Herod, the King and his sister came with great pomp to the place of hearing. They were accompanied by the chief captains and the principal men of the city. Having seated themselves Paul was brought in. The governor in fitting terms stated the reason why the court had met. The prisoner had been accused by the Jews, and Festus had found that he had committed nothing worthy of death. And the present hearing of the case was held, "For it seemeth to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not withal to signify the charges against him."³ But the perplexity of the governor arose from the fact

¹ Acts xxv. 19.² Ibid. xxv. 22.³ Ibid. xxv. 27.

that he had nothing definite to say, "No certain thing to write unto my lord."

Paul had now an opportunity of making his defence. He had begun his defence on the stairs of the temple, and had been interrupted. He had again and again tried to state his case fully, and had never been allowed to finish it. Shall he be allowed to make his defence now? and be allowed to continue to the end? We shall see. At all events, Paul will make such use of the opportunity as he can. He is in the presence of the King and his sister. He has to speak before the Roman Governor and the chief captains of the garrison of Cæsarea. Around him, too, must have been people of many nationalities, and Jews violently opposed to him, and both Jewish and Gentile Christians devotedly attached to him. Paul is permitted to speak for himself, and so much of his speech as he was permitted to give lies before us in the Acts of the Apostles. In main outline it is the defence with which we are already familiar. Paul has the conviction that his best defence is to give a narrative of the facts of his life. Then he tells the King of his manner of life before he became a Christian, of his hatred of Jesus and His followers, of the manner of his conversion, and of the commission given him by Christ. These are the main points set forth by the Apostle, and they are in essential agreement with Luke's narrative of the conversion, and with the speech delivered from the temple stairs. The variations are such as may be readily explained, nor need the explanation detain us here. Having been sent forth by Christ, Paul had gone to Damascus, Judæa, to the Gentiles, to preach repentance and faith, and everywhere to declare "that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first, by the resurrection of the dead, should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles."

It is really curious that when Paul speaks to Romans or Greeks of the resurrection of the dead, he should always at that point be interrupted. It seems to be a notion that they could not grasp, and if they did grasp it, it seemed to them to be utter madness. They could understand the doctrine of immortality, but that form of immortality brought to light by the gospel seemed to them, as it seems to many now, to be foolishness, or worse. Festus listened up to this point, and he heard the gospel compressed into a single sentence. Christ by suffering, dying, and rising again, had become the source of

light and life to Jew and Gentile alike. But this seemed to him to be mere madness. He interrupted somewhat rudely. With a loud voice he said: "Paul, thou art mad; thy much learning doth turn thee to madness."¹ It is scarcely possible for us, to whom the teaching of Paul has become the very elements of our thinking and acting, to enter into the state of mind which could find in this speech nothing but the ravings of a diseased mind. Festus could see that there was a kind of method in this madness. It was not the ravings of an ordinary lunatic, but it was the unsoundness of mind produced by much learning. Gleams of insight were in it, flashes of glorious meaning were there, but to Festus these seemed only to bring forth into clear prominence the lunatic absurdity of the other beliefs of the Apostle. Paul's reply was as much marked for the courtesy of its tone and manner, as the remark of the governor was for its rudeness. "I am not mad, most excellent Festus; but speak forth words of truth and soberness." He answers with gentleness, gives the governor the title of respect due to his position, and claims for himself that his words are the words of truth and soberness, utterly opposed to the very possibility of madness.

Turning now to the King, who had listened with attention to what Paul had said, he appeals to Agrippa's personal knowledge. The King must have known of the rise of Christianity, and must have known of the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus. None of these things could be hidden from him. Then comes the sentence which contains the essential position of Christian apologetics: "For this hath not been done in a corner."² Christianity has taken hold of history, and forced it to record its appearance in this world, and its course therein. Itself of an origin beyond history and time, and having in it something that transcends time, it has entered into human history, laid hold of all the laws, forces, and conditions which make history, stamped them with its own impress, and used them for its own purpose. No, these things were not done in a corner. They could not be hid, and from this time forth they have become the ruling power of history, and will become so more and more. Nor had it come without a preparation being made for its coming, both in Israel and among other peoples. Paul could testify that he was "saying

¹ Acts xxv. 24.

² Ibid. xxv. 26.

nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come.”¹ Believing that the teaching of the prophets had their fulfilment in Christ, Paul appeals to King Agrippa, “Believest thou the prophets?” and immediately answers his own question, “I know that thou believest.” What was the kind of faith which Agrippa had in the prophets we may not well determine, but that he did believe them in some measure and to some extent is certain. He foresees, however, that Paul would speedily make use of this concession, and proceed to build on it an argument for Christianity. With some haste he anticipates the further remarks of the Apostle. “With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian.”² The Revised Version more truly represents the sense of the Greek than does the Authorised Version. The King saw that Paul strove to convince him. He saw also that Paul sought to persuade him by means of the Old Testament, and he frustrated the hope of the Apostle by his words. Suppose that he did believe the prophets, it by no means followed that he believed them in the Apostle’s sense. The meaning of the King is that the attempt of the Apostle was so much labour lost. It would take a great deal more to persuade him to be a Christian. Paul’s dignified reply ends the scene: “I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, save these bonds.”³

Thus Paul’s last recorded apology for himself and for his faith came to an end. It remains, like all the others, unfinished. So far he was allowed to speak, and no farther. He had never been permitted to say all he wished to say, and now the time is nearly come when this weary imprisonment at Cæsarea shall be over. For the governor and the King agreed that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds, and Agrippa had stated his view without reserve that Paul might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæsar. It seems cruel that Paul should have been constrained, through the persistence of his enemies, and the weakness of two Roman governors, to appeal to the Emperor. In one view it seemed to prolong his imprisonment. But in another view the wrath and the weakness of men were elements in the working out of the purpose of God. These were stages on the way to Rome.

Paul and Aristarchus and Luke—we know not whether there

¹ Acts xxvi. 22.

² Ibid. xxvi. 28.

³ Ibid. xxvi. 29.

were any more of Paul's friends—were taken on board a ship. Paul and other prisoners were placed in the charge of Julius, a centurion of the Augustan band, who was made responsible for them and was bound to present them at Rome. The ship was a coasting vessel, and traded from port to port along the coast of Asia Minor, from Cæsarea to Sidon, where Paul was allowed to go on shore and refresh himself and to see his friends; and from Sidon, passing between Cyprus and the mainland, they came to Myra, a city of Lycia. Luke mentions, as if in remembrance of the work of Paul in these regions, that they sailed "across the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia."¹ Already Paul seems to have won the confidence and trust of Julius the centurion. For he was allowed to go ashore at Sidon apparently without a guard.

At Myra they leave the coasting vessel and embark on board a ship of Alexandria, sailing for Italy. It is not our purpose to narrate in detail the incidents of this eventful and perilous voyage. The narrative of Luke is exceedingly graphic and easy to be understood. The course of the voyage has also been minutely mapped out and the story verified in almost every particular. From the outset it was a disastrous voyage. They were kept back by head-winds. They sailed slowly for many days, and made but little progress. They altered their course and sailed under the lee of Crete, over against Salmone, and with difficulty coasting along it came to Fair Havens, near to the city of Lasea. These places have been identified and fully described in "The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul," by Smith of Jordan Hill. At this point of the story we are reminded of the difference between seafaring life in ancient and in modern times. Navigation was attempted in that day only during the more favourable months of the year. The weather was now dangerous, and Paul had been making observations both with regard to the season of the year and to the condition of the ship. We have a note of time in the remark that "the Fast" was now past. The fast was that of the great day of atonement, and we thus know that it was now in the month of September or October. It forms also a strange comment on the Jewish accusation against Paul, that he disregarded "the customs," to find him and his friends keeping the Fast when they were far away at sea.

¹ Acts xxvii. 5.

Paul spoke his mind freely to the people on board. He perceived that the voyage would involve risk and danger to ship and cargo and also to the lives of all on board, and apparently he advised them to winter at Crete; but the centurion gave more heed to the master and owner of the ship, and accordingly on a day when the south wind blew softly, they set sail from Crete with the view of reaching the commodious harbour of Phœnix, where they might conveniently and safely pass the winter. They sailed close in shore. Soon they were caught by the tempestuous wind called Euraquilo, a wind which was so common as to have a distinctive name, descriptive both of its violence and of the direction from whence it came. The wind mastered them; they could not bear up against it, and were compelled to run before it. The various incidents bring before us in a vivid manner the perils through which they passed. As they passed under the lee of Cauda, and were sheltered for a little time, they made an attempt to secure the safety of the boat, which had been towing after the ship all the time. After great difficulty they hoisted it on board. Then, to help the ship to bear the strain, they drew strong cables round the hull of the ship several times to keep the timbers from parting. Fearing lest they should be driven ashore on the African coast, upon the Syrtis, a noted quicksand, they took down everything they could, and allowed themselves to be driven before the storm.

One day they cast the cargo overboard, and the next day they cast out what Luke describes as "the tackling of the ship." Everything not absolutely necessary was thrown overboard to lighten the ship and give them a chance for their lives. Hope was given up. Neither sun nor stars were seen by them for many days. They had lost their reckoning, and there was no abatement of the storm. So discouraged and hopeless were they all that they had not taken any food for some time. "When they had been long without food,"¹ is the phrase with which Luke describes the state of despair into which they had fallen. There had been no preparation of food and no regular meal time on board the ship. It was in this state of matters that Paul came forward and practically took command of all on board. He alone had withstood the influence of circumstances and had risen superior to the peril

¹ Acts xxvii. 21.

in which they all stood. He had been often in dangers as great. Thrice already had he suffered shipwreck, a day and a night had he once spent in the deep.¹ And he knew how necessary it was in moments of danger for men to maintain their physical strength and to keep their courage up. But the calmness and courage of the Apostle were fetched not from his experience of past dangers, nor from a natural hardihood of temperament, but from a widely different source. In these days of toil, discomfort, and peril, Paul had been deep in prayer, and had obtained an answer to his prayer. He now stands forth as a messenger of God to these perplexed, wearied, and despairing people. He reminds them of the little heed they had given to his advice not to loose from Crete. He bids them hope. He assures them that neither ship nor life shall be lost. He tells them that he has received a message from God, "the God whose I am and whom I serve."² The Apostle had cried unto God in the common distress, and the Lord had heard and answered, "Fear not, Paul ; thou shalt stand before Cæsar : and lo, God hath granted thee all them that sail with thee."³ He added that it was his firm belief that it would be well with them and no life be lost.

The effect of the Apostle's statement, and the sight of his calm and undaunted bearing, must have had a stimulating effect on the soldiers and crew. By this time all of them must have known that Paul was a man to be trusted. He had been closely associated with them all. Shut up within the narrow space on board the ship, forced to come into close contact with him, they must have observed his bearing in times of danger, and must have come to some accurate knowledge of what manner of man he was. And they could not help being impressed with his earnest and thorough belief in the truth and reality of what he promised. For fourteen nights, since they had left Fair Havens, they had helplessly drifted to and fro in the sea of Adria—a name which was not then limited as now to the Adriatic sea, but meant that part of the Mediterranean which lies between Greece, Italy, and Africa. About midnight the sailors surmised that they were nearing land. They sounded and found twenty fathoms, and after a little space they sounded again and found fifteen fathoms. "They cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day." Such are the simple, touching words in

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 25.² Acts xxvii. 23.³ Ibid. xxvii. 24.

which Luke describes the feeling of those on board. We find next the only touch of baseness and cowardice recorded by Luke during all that wearisome voyage. The sailors, feeling they were within reach of land, forgetful of their duty, resolved to make for the shore. They pretended that they were to lay out anchors from the foreship, and had lowered the boat, when their purpose was thwarted by the prompt interference of the Apostle. He knew that the skill of the sailors was needed in the crisis in which they were. The soldiers and prisoners would be helpless in the midst of scenes and dangers to which they were not accustomed. True, God had promised to Paul the lives of all in the ship; but Paul knew also that every human effort must be made, and if the sailors deserted the ship the others could not be saved. The centurion, on Paul's suggestion, took steps to defeat the purpose of the sailors. They cut away the ropes of the boat and let her fall off.

That they might be better prepared to use every means for reaching land, Paul urged them to take food, for they had been very irregular in this, as in most other things, during the fourteen days of their perilous voyage. They had taken a little now and then, but the Apostle asks them now to prepare and to take sufficient food to strengthen them for the work that required to be done. He assured them of their safety. He asked them to take every precaution, he showed them the example, took bread, gave thanks to God and did eat. And they followed him and were not a little strengthened. They then with renewed courage set to work and lightened the ship by casting the wheat into the sea. Thus prepared, they waited for the day, and when daylight appeared they found themselves near an unknown land. Their hope now was to run the ship on shore as safely as possible. They perceived a certain bay with a beach, and they took counsel whether they could drive the ship upon it. But they could not make it out. They got much nearer the shore than they were at first, but the vessel struck and they had after all to swim for their lives. Those who could swim cast themselves overboard, and the rest, some on planks and some on other things from the ship, got safe to land. Not one perished. The prisoners had escaped death in various forms, and at the last had narrowly escaped a new peril, for the soldiers, afraid lest they should swim out and escape, resolved to kill the prisoners; but the centurion,

desirous to save Paul, stayed them from their purpose. Of the two hundred, three score and sixteen souls on board that ship not one was lost. They all got safe to land. We need make no remark on the enthralling interest, nor on the graphic powers and evident truth of the narrative. We feel as if we were present, as if we also felt the chill of the cold, vapour-laden atmosphere, as if we too drifted at the mercy of wind and wave, till we know not where we are, and hope becomes cold and dead. We feel how the steadfast courage of one man may serve to animate a great number of men; and above all we note how faith in God and fellowship with Him lifts a man above the circumstances and dangers of time. The soul fixed on God has the calmness of eternity. A man who can call on God, who can say with Paul, "The God whose I am and whom I serve," has no fear of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, he trusts in God, and he is safe.

They were shipwrecked on the island of Malta. It is not necessary to discuss the opinion that they were landed on an island in the Gulf of Venice. We may feel assured that modern investigation has set that matter for ever at rest, and Malta is the place. The shipwrecked crew and passengers were received by the inhabitants with all kindness. They kindled a fire, evidently the first thing to be done, as they were all chilled to the bone. Paul, ever ready to take part in needful work, whether that work was to advise, or to comfort, or to help by bodily toil, set himself actively to help. He gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire. Among the sticks which he gathered was a viper, which, numbed by the cold, had been powerless to move. It woke into life with the heat, sprung away from it, and fastened on the hand of Paul. That the viper was poisonous we see from the conduct of the people, who expected that Paul should have swollen or fallen down dead suddenly. The people had their own way of interpreting events, and their own natural theology. At first they thought that Paul was a murderer. They believed in retribution, and they said among themselves, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped from the sea, yet Justice hath not suffered to live."¹ When Paul shook off the viper into the fire, and felt no harm, and when they saw no harm come to him, they thought he

¹ Acts xxviii. 4.

was a god. The shipwrecked people were hospitably received and entertained by the people, and Publius, the chief man, received the centurion and Paul and others. He said that by means of Paul they more than repaid the kindness they received. The father of Publius was healed by Paul, and many others who had diseases in the island came, and were healed. Thus conferring and receiving benefits, the three months of their stay in Malta passed away. Paul and his friends were honoured with many honours, and when they departed they were loaded with such things as were necessary.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN ROME.

Departure from Malta—Arrival in Rome—Last appeal to the Jews, and its result—The Church at Rome, and the Epistle to the Romans—Postponement of the trial—The work of the Apostle—The Epistles of the captivity—The friends of the Apostle—His manifold labours—His future plans—The Pastoral Epistles as a source for the Apostle's biography—His release—His movements in the interval between his first and second imprisonment—His second arrest—His demeanour in view of the end—His solitude—His confidence—His martyrdom.

WHEN the winter was over, and the usual time for sailing had come, St. Paul and his friends set sail in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the island. They had a prosperous voyage, and speedily reached Syracuse, where they made a stay of three days. With a fair south wind, on the second day they reached Puteoli, and their voyage by sea came to an end. Here they found a Christian Church, and abode with them for about seven days; "and so we came to Rome."¹ The Christian Church at Rome had, during these seven days, heard of the arrival of the Apostle at Puteoli, and heard also of the time when he was likely to set out for Rome. They went forth to meet St. Paul as far as the Market of Appius and The Three Taverns. The first-mentioned of these places was about forty miles from Rome, and the other about thirty miles. The Church at Rome knew the name of the Apostle well. They had received from him his greatest Epistle, and had for a long time expected his coming to them. Now they meet him, as a prisoner who has come to stand his trial before the Emperor. St. Paul,

¹ Acts xxviii. 24.

too, had hoped to come to them "in the fulness of the blessing of Christ."¹ So indeed he did come, but with the drawback of imprisonment. But even this turned out in the long run to be for the furtherance of the gospel of Christ. When the Apostle saw the Roman Christians, "he thanked God, and took courage."²

The centurion, glad that the journey was at an end and his time of anxious responsibility over, delivered up the prisoners. St. Paul was allowed to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him. To this there are frequent allusions in the Epistles of the imprisonment. For it was the custom that the soldier and the prisoner should be chained to one another. As soon as these necessary preliminaries were over, and the Apostle knew where he was to be for a time, he sent for the representatives of the Jews at Rome. In accordance with his principle, "to the Jew first," he now, and apparently for the last time, sought to persuade his kinsmen that the Messiah had come. At the first meeting he explained to them the causes of his imprisonment. He explains why he has appealed. In his own defence, and not as an accuser of the Jews, he had made the appeal to Cæsar. But there was something greater involved, because, if his bondage were rightly understood, it would be found that for the hope of Israel was he bound with this chain. The Jews informed him that they knew nothing of the matter. They had received no letters from Judæa, nor had any reports about the Apostle reached them. They knew, however, that the Christian sect was everywhere spoken against by the Jews. However, they were willing to hear what he had to say.

On the day appointed a great number of them came to the place where the Apostle lodged. With great deliberation and care, and with a fervent wish to persuade them, he spoke to them, "testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses, and from the prophets, from morning till evening."³ Some there were who believed, and some did not believe. They did not agree among themselves, and this disagreement may serve to explain why they did not seek to hasten the trial of the Apostle. But it served also to show to the Apostle that henceforth in Rome his work must be not among them, but among the Gentiles.

¹ Rom. xv. 29.

² Acts xxviii. 15.

³ Ibid. xxviii. 23.

How often he had tried, and in how many places, to reach his kinsmen, and how passionately he loved them, we may gather from his words : " I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh : who are Israelites ; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises ; whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." ¹ But they would not be persuaded, and the Apostle had to bid them farewell. Slowly and sorrowfully he recognised the facts, and bowed to their strength. With that word from Isaiah, which had been used by the Master, he leaves them and turns to the Gentiles.

In the final words of his history Luke tells us that " he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him." ² While we had the light of the Acts of the Apostles to guide us, we scarcely knew how great and how indispensable was the help given us in our attempt to follow the footsteps of the Apostle. When, however, the light has failed us, and we are left to grope our way by the dim taper of tradition, we see how much we owe to Luke. Two whole years' work are compressed into a sentence, a sentence full and descriptive, certainly, but painfully lacking in particulars. No doubt we may gather something from the four Epistles which he wrote from Rome during these years, and much regarding the topics which occupied his thoughts. We should not forget the light cast on these concluding verses, by the fact that the Apostle had already written the Epistle to the Romans. When he received all that went in unto him, we may think of the members of the Roman Church coming to the Apostle to be instructed by him in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. They may have come one by one, or they may have come in such numbers as could find room in the Apostle's hired dwelling ; at all events, these two years were among the most fruitful years in his most fruitful life.

We cannot here enter into any discussion of the Epistle to the Romans, nor discuss the questions which arise regarding

¹ Rom. ix. 3-5.

² Acts xxviii. 30, 31.

the origin and character of the Roman Church. Within our limits it is impossible to do so, and it would be presumptuous to attempt it. We shall only say here that the Roman Church was from the beginning in perfect spiritual sympathy with the Apostle, that it was likely founded by his own disciples and converts, and would be universally recognised as pertaining to his domain. As to the Epistle itself, what can be said? Only this, that it is one of those Epistles, if not the only one in which the Apostle is free to unfold his thought without interruption and distraction. In other Epistles he must write with a view to the needs of a particular Church; he must recognise and remove their special doubts, difficulties, and errors; he must reprove, rebuke, exhort; and must write, not what he would, but what he can. In the Epistle to the Romans he writes in order, and passes on from the doctrine of human sin and sorrow to the supreme remedy for both, to faith, righteousness, hope, and peace, and to the purpose of God, fully realised in Christ. Here, too, as elsewhere, we see that for St. Paul Christ is the solution of every problem, the solvent of every doubt. But on this we may not linger. We must try to trace the life of the Apostle until the end came.

One thing is clear, that the trial of the Apostle did not take place during the two years mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. His accusers had not arrived before him, since the Jews at Rome had not heard from Jerusalem, nor was there any speaking against St. Paul in the synagogue at Rome. In the absence of the accusers the trial was necessarily postponed. The result was that the Apostle was kept a prisoner for an indefinite period. The imprisonment was as lenient as was consistent with safe keeping. The Apostle was permitted to live in his own house; his friends were allowed free access to him; and he could communicate by letter with as many as he pleased. In fact, though confined to one place, and always in the custody of a soldier, his was a life of unusual activity and of commanding influence. When he was unable to go to the people, the people came to him. His former friends sought him out, and he made many new friends. He was also in frequent communication with the Churches he had founded. Luke and Aristarchus were seemingly with him during all these two years. Tychicus,¹ who was the bearer of his letter to

¹ Col. iv. 7.

the Church at Ephesus, had been for some time with him. Timothy,¹ who had been a companion and fellow-labourer of his for so long a time, was also with him at Rome, and the Apostle joins him with himself in the greeting to the Churches of Philippi and Colossæ, and in the letter to Philemon. Epaphroditus² had come from Philippi to rejoice the heart of the Apostle with a gift valuable in itself, but enhanced in value to a measureless degree because it was a sign of the love and affection of the Philippian Church to him. Mark,³ the cousin of Barnabas, now reinstated in the friendship and esteem of the Apostle, and Justus, a fellow-labourer of the Apostle, are described as "men that have been a comfort to me." Epaphras also, from Colossæ, had come to visit the Apostle, and to tell him of the state of the Churches at Colossæ, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. He would soon return, bearing with him the greetings of St. Paul to these Churches. Others there were, such as Demas, who, constant for a time, yet grieved him, as afterwards he has to write concerning him, "Demas forsook me, having loved this present world."⁴

St. Paul had been cheered and comforted by the presence and sympathy of these men, all of whom took great delight in ministering to his necessities both of body and of spirit. Perhaps the most interesting episode of his prison life known to us is contained in his letter to Philemon. It illustrates the character of the Apostle and it throws light on the method of his work. It is the story of an Asiatic slave, Onesimus, who belonged to a Christian named Philemon, a member of the Church at Colossæ. Onesimus had robbed his master. He was a thief and a runaway, offences by no means uncommon among slaves, for slaves were treated by the law as if they had no rights, and on their side they acted as if they had no responsibilities. Onesimus had fled to Rome, as the place where he could best find concealment. But in the great city he somehow came in contact with St. Paul. He may have heard of the Apostle, may, indeed, have seen him, and now, impelled by some motive, was constrained to seek the Apostle's presence. Once in the presence of St. Paul, he was caught more securely than if he had been seized by his enraged master. Onesimus was con-

¹ Phil. i. 1; Col. i. 1; Philemon i. 8.

² Phil. iv. 18.

³ Col. iv. 10-11.

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 10.

verted to Christ, and confessed to the Apostle that he had defrauded his master, and other errors of his past sinful life. We see here how thoroughly the Apostle had learned the practical application of the principles he had preached. The Apostle found in Onesimus, not a slave, a human chattel without legal rights, but "a brother beloved." St. Paul found something very winning and helpful in the character of Onesimus, and he, the free Roman citizen, recognising none of the artificial distinctions on which human society lays so much stress, treated the runaway slave as a brother and an equal. The distinction between bond and free had vanished in the new equality instituted by Christ. But even more noteworthy is the resolution of St. Paul to send Onesimus back to his master. He will not act without the consent of Philemon. Onesimus has erred and repented, but he must also make restitution. He must return to service; he must restore what he took away. The Apostle undertook the payment of the money debt, the other Onesimus must himself pay. To make the matter easier for the penitent, Paul undertook to write the letter now in our hands, one of the most interesting in all literature, even if we look at the merely human interest of the matter. The splendid courtesy, the noble generosity, the inflexible sense of justice and righteousness, the delicate sympathy, and the supreme practical wisdom of the Apostle, all receive illustration in this brief letter. Nor are the wider interests left without recognition. The spirit of this letter has so interpenetrated society that now no man can be held as the chattel of another. We do not hesitate to believe that Philemon obeyed the request of his spiritual father, and did receive Onesimus, "no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved."¹

Thus many interests and many friends helped to cheer and enliven the Apostle during the time of his captivity. But the fact and the misery of imprisonment remained, and were galling to the mind and body of the Apostle. In his Epistles he speaks frequently of himself as "I, Paul, the prisoner of the Lord,"² or calls on his friends to remember his bonds. He makes his bonds the frequent occasion of appeal to his people that they should "live soberly, righteously, and godly." He reminds them that he could never move without the clanking of the chain. In the last of the Epistles, which he wrote during

¹ Phil. 16.² Eph. iii. 1; iv. 1.

this time of imprisonment—that to the Philippians—he is in anxiety as the time of his trial draws near. He is both doubtful and hopeful as to the issue. “Him (Timothy) I hope to send forthwith as soon as I shall see how it will go with me ; but I trust in the Lord that I myself shall come shortly.”¹ His anxiety did not, however, impair his cheerfulness, nor lead him into discontent. He had learned contentment, but it was a hard lesson. He may have, nay, he must have, fretted, must have been impatient during his long time of imprisonment at Cæsarea, but now he has overcome that feeling. He can now look back on all the way by which he has been led, and can see how all things have worked together for good ; not merely for his own personal good, but for that which he had more at heart, the furtherance of the gospel. “I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel ; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole Prætorian guard, and to all the rest.”² By means of his imprisonment the gospel had been preached to those to whom it would not otherwise have been preached. The Church at Rome had been greatly strengthened since his arrival at Rome, and the brethren, encouraged by the example of the Apostle, were “more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear.”³ Thus, on all sides, apart from his own situation, the Apostle had cause for gladness. Believers in Christ had increased in number, in zeal, and energy ; and they were of all ranks and classes, from the runaway slave, like Onesimus, up to those that were of Cæsar’s household.

Even in his imprisonment, and with all the work now accumulated on his hands—the direct work of preaching Christ to all who came to him, and the other work of the guidance of distant Churches by his Epistles—he was forming wider and more far-reaching plans for the progress of the gospel. We know that he hoped, as soon as his trial was over, to visit Ephesus, Colossæ, Laodicea, and the other Churches in that neighbourhood ; for he writes to Philemon, “Withal prepare me also a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers, I shall be granted unto you.”⁴ When he writes to the Philippians he is confidently persuaded that he shall be able to visit them again.

¹ Phil. ii. 23, 24.

³ Ibid. i. 14.

² Ibid. i. 12, 13.

⁴ Philemon 22.

“I know that I shall abide, yea, and abide with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith ; that your glorying may abound in Christ Jesus in me, through my presence with you again.”¹ Were these hopes of his realised? Did the Apostle visit the scene of his first European work again, and was he able to enjoy the hospitality of Philemon? The answer to these questions depends on the view taken of the Pastoral Epistles, and of their Pauline authorship. If they were written by St. Paul, then we have clear evidence of his release from imprisonment, and of his abundant work and travel during the few years which elapsed between his first and his second imprisonment at Rome. It is keenly debated at the present time whether St. Paul was released from the captivity recorded by Luke, whether he wrote the Pastoral Epistles, and whether we have any trustworthy information of his movements after this date.

It is obvious that we may not discuss these questions here ; but something must be said to justify the use we are to make of the Pastoral Epistles. It has been urged that there is no room for these Epistles, and no fit place for them in the life of Paul as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. This may be readily granted. It is so obvious on the slightest examination of the facts, that it is scarcely necessary to mention it. But the remark is as irrelevant as it is true. To say that we can find no room, in a narrative which does not record anything that happened after the year A.D. 63, for letters which were written subsequent to that time, is as relevant for any practical purpose as the remark would be that Tacitus does not refer to the battle of Waterloo. Before the observation can have any point it ought to be shown by historical evidence that the Apostle did not survive the year A.D. 64, and also that the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles contains the whole of his active life. But such evidence it is impossible to produce. A stronger argument against the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is found in the number of words and phrases found in them and not found in the other Epistles of St. Paul. It is quite true that there are such peculiarities of diction. On this point Dr. Salmon writes as follows : “The difficulty arising from peculiarities of diction we have already learned to disregard. The Epistles which I have previously examined exhibit in Paul’s writings very great varieties of expression, showing

¹ Phil. i. 25, 26.

him to be a man of considerable mental pliability, and not one whose stock of phrases would be likely to be stereotyped when he came to write these letters. But I willingly concede that the argument from the diction makes it likely that the Pastoral Epistles were written at no great distance of time from each other, and probably at some distance of time from the other Epistles. For in Paul's Epistles we find great likeness of expression between Epistles written at nearly the same time, as, for instance, between those to the Romans and Galatians, between those to the Ephesians and Colossians, while the different groups of Epistles differ considerably in words and topics from each other. This is what we find on examining the different works of any author who has written much, viz., considerable resemblance in style between works of the same period ; but often modifications of style as he advances in life. Now, though each group of Paul's Epistles has its peculiarities of diction, there are links of connection between the phraseology of each group, and that of the next in order of time ; and there are such links between that of the Pastoral Epistles and of the letters of the imprisonment."¹ Such links of connection Dr. Salmon points out, and they are obvious when pointed out. A full discussion of this and other points may be found in Dr. Huther's Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus, which forms part of Meyer's "Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament," an English translation of which is published by Messrs. T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh.

Another difficulty is found in the traces which they bear of an ecclesiastical organization and theological development which it is alleged belong to a later age than that of St. Paul. The force of this argument is by no means obvious. We find traces of ecclesiastical organization in other Epistles of St. Paul. He writes "to all the saints which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons,"² which proves that the Church at Philippi was definitely organized, with proper office-bearers, having distinctive functions and duties. "That the Epistles imply an ecclesiastical organization in advance of that which their supposed date warrants can scarcely be maintained. The letters themselves were written because as yet there was no definite, well-understood organization. They were meant to

¹ "Introduction to the New Testament," second edition, pp. 418-9.

² Phil. i. 1.

guide Timothy and Titus in matters so fundamental as the character requisite in those who were ordained as elders and deacons. Besides, we find in these Epistles precisely what was characteristic of apostolic times and not of the second century, the plurality and equality of presbyters in each Church. There is no trace of the monarchical episcopate elevating itself above the presbyterial administration. For the tradition mentioned by Eusebius, that Timothy was 'bishop' of Ephesus, and Titus 'bishop of Crete' is refuted by the letters themselves, which amply prove that the office, if such it may be called, held by these friends of Paul, was merely temporary."¹ Add to this the significant fact that all Paul's other Epistles were written to congregations, and were concerned mainly with questions of doctrine and conduct, and that these Pastoral Epistles were written to men who were pastors, teachers, rulers in the Church, and we have a sufficient explanation of the prominent position which questions of ecclesiastical order and Church government hold in them. The different purpose accounts for the difference in the topics discussed and in the mode of discussion. More than this we need not say, as this is sufficient to justify us in using these Epistles as material for the biography of the Apostle. We get from them these facts, that St. Paul was released from imprisonment, that he resumed his work, that after a time he was again arrested and brought to Rome, and while there waiting his trial a second time, wrote these, or at least one of these, Epistles, for the future guidance of the Churches he had founded.

From a passing reference we gather that his first trial was past, and that he was acquitted. "At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me; may it not be laid to their account. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me: that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."² While he stood before the Roman Emperor, no one of his friends was with him, and he himself was ready to live or die according to the will of Christ. He had a desire to depart and be with Christ, "For it is very far better."³ But he recognised that there might yet be work for him to do, and he doubtless used all available means for

¹ Dr. Marcus Dods, "Introduction to the New Testament," p. 176.

² 2 Tim. iv. 16-17.

³ Phil. i. 23.

his acquittal, and he was acquitted, to begin a new course of work, for the advance of the kingdom of Christ. By the witness of the Pastoral Epistles we know that he revisited Ephesus.¹ On his liberation he seems to have left Rome, and travelled by the usual route to Macedonia, as he expected to do when he wrote the Epistle to the Philippians.² We may imagine the joy of his meeting with the Church at Philippi. The greater his joy in them, and the more perfect his satisfaction with them, the shorter would his stay be; for they did not need his presence as much as the Churches in Asia Minor. These Churches were already in the grasp of incipient heresy, and he had many things to say to them.

What these heresies were may be gathered from the Epistle to the Colossians and from the Pastoral Epistles. We may not describe them here, as it would lead us too far afield. He may have visited Colossæ and Laodicea, and it is almost certain that he was at Ephesus, for in the verse already referred to, he tells us that he had left Timothy at Ephesus, while he himself was on his way to Macedonia. There is no room for this visit in the accounts of Paul's residence at Ephesus, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles; for on his first visit he went, not to Macedonia, but to Syria,³ and on the termination of his second visit he did indeed depart for Macedonia, but he did not leave Timothy in Ephesus, having already sent him to Macedonia.⁴ So there is no place for the visit mentioned here, except during the journey after the first Roman imprisonment of the Apostle. He could not stay for any length of time, and he left Timothy behind to finish the work he could not accomplish. To this end he wrote the First Epistle to Timothy, in order to strengthen his hands, and to lay down permanent principles for his guidance in dealing with heretics, unbelievers, and, in short, with all the problems which might arise in the course of his ministry.

From the Epistle to Titus we learn that the Apostle had recently been with Titus in Crete,⁵ and was on his way westward when he wrote it. We know too little to be able to say with certainty when this visit to Crete took place. It may have been on his return from Ephesus, or it may have been at some other time, say on his visit to Spain, if he did indeed go to Spain. That

¹ 1 Tim. i. 3.

² Phil. ii. 24.

³ Acts xviii. 19-21.

⁴ Ibid. xix. 22.

⁵ Titus i. 5.

he had been with Titus in Crete is sure, and that when he wrote to him he intended to winter at Nicopolis¹ is clear enough. But the data are too scanty for us to construct an itinerary from them, such as Luke has given us in the Acts of the Apostles. The stay of the Apostle in that island was but brief, and he left Titus to "set in order the things that were wanting, and to appoint elders in every city."² The Church in Crete had already been in existence when he visited it, but not organized nor instructed as it ought to have been. To Titus was entrusted the task of organizing the Church in Crete, and as soon as he had accomplished it, he was instructed to come to Paul at Nicopolis, in Epirus, where he had determined to winter.

In the Second Epistle to Timothy we find that the Apostle is back in Rome. He had recently been at Troas, Corinth, and Miletus. At Troas he had left a cloak with Carpus, with books and parchments.³ So this journey must have been quite recent. At Miletus he had left Trophimus in sickness, and Erastus he had left at Corinth. In Rome he had been again imprisoned, and was now persuaded that the end was near. But he has still some hope that he may be again delivered; at all events, he writes to Timothy, "Do thy diligence to come before winter."⁴ We see that the time of the Apostle was fully occupied, that in the interval between his first and second imprisonments he was in many places, and was pressed with anxieties and cares as much as ever. He may indeed have travelled as far as Spain, as he formerly intended,⁵ and as a very early tradition affirms. "Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient continuance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned. After preaching both in the east and in the west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects."⁶ Such is the testimony of Clement of Rome, and it was also a pretty constant tradition after his time. It is possible, indeed likely, that the Apostle did visit Spain. But we need not enter into controversy on the point; because even if we were able to

¹ Titus iii. 12.

² Ibid. i. 5.

³ 2 Tim. iv. 13.

⁴ 2 Ibid. iv. 22.

⁵ Rom. xv. 24.

⁶ "Apostolic Fathers," p. 11 (T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh).

prove the fact of his visit, we should still be quite ignorant of what he said and did, of what he planned and suffered on that western journey.

We come back, then, to the second imprisonment of the Apostle, and to the state of isolation in which he found himself. We earnestly long to know what were the circumstances which led to his arrest. He may have been arrested in Nicopolis, and sent to Rome for trial. His arrest may have been the occasion on which the courage, endurance, and faith of Demas was tried and found wanting. "Demas forsook me, having loved this present world."¹ He chose to desert the Apostle, and to go to Thessalonica. Titus indeed had reached him, but he had been sent to Dalmatia; Crescens was sent to Galatia; and of all his friends and followers, only Luke was with him. He longs for the presence of Timothy and Mark. He has need of all the strength which their presence could give him. We know how greatly he depended on the sympathy of his friends, and now their absence was felt by him as a bereavement.

Traces appear of the fact that his second imprisonment was much more severe than his first. "I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor."² He has not the same freedom; his friends still have access to him, but under more severe restrictions. It takes great courage and great affection for him on the part of those who desire to come to him and to minister to him. Many were ashamed of his chain, and many, foreseeing danger, took themselves out of the way. He keenly remembers both kinds of people. He remembers how Phygelus and Hermogenes³ had, along with others in Asia, turned away from him; how Demas had forsaken him; how they all had left him in the hour of his sorest need. He remembers also how Onesiphorus⁴ had sought him out, earnestly and diligently; how he scorned every danger, rose superior to every fear, and was content to front every danger, if he could only help the Apostle. With what fervent, glowing words he records his feelings of thankfulness, and how much he was refreshed by the true and tender courage of his friend. Though many had forsaken him, yet some friends remained. Luke was with him, and with him also were the friends whose

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 10.

² Ibid. ii. 9.

³ Ibid. i. 15.

⁴ Ibid. i. 16.

salutations he sends to Timothy. "Eubulus saluteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren."¹

In no unmanly spirit does the great Apostle face the perils in which he stood, nor is the time or thought he bestows on himself unduly great. He lets us see how keenly he felt the desertion of his friends, and how much he delighted in the love and generosity of those who were faithful. But he is even more concerned about the Churches he may no longer serve, and the perils they may have to pass through. He knows that there are people whose "words will eat as doth a gangrene,"² and he is afraid lest his converts should make shipwreck. He will not spend his time in thinking about himself or his defence, or about the imminent peril in which he stands. He speaks words which burn, and breathe, which brace the heart to battle, and the mind to endurance and hope. He is anxious and troubled, but it is for other people. He is afraid, but his fear is lest error and sin should creep in and destroy the flock. As for himself, he knows that "the Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom."³ He saw before him the near approach of death in a cruel form. He knew that from the chains and fetters of imprisonment he was to have only one release. But he can calmly, nay, triumphantly, say, "I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day ; and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved His appearing."⁴ In this spirit he waits for the end, and the end is soon to come.

Eusebius thus writes, "Whilst he was a prisoner, he wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy, in which he both mentions his first defence and his impending death. Hear, on these points, his own testimony respecting himself : ' In my former defence no one was present with me, but all deserted me. May it not be laid to their charge. But the Lord was with me, and strengthened me, that through me the preaching of the gospel might be fulfilled, and all the nations hear it. And I was delivered out of the lion's mouth.' He plainly intimates in these words, ' On the former occasion he was rescued from the

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 21. ² 2 Ibid. ii. 17. ³ Ibid. iv. 18. ⁴ Ibid. iv. 6-8.

lion's mouth that the preaching of the gospel might be accomplished,' that it was Nero to whom he referred by this expression, as is probable on account of his cruelty. Therefore he did not subsequently subjoin any such expression as, 'He will rescue me from the lion's mouth,' for he saw in spirit how near his approaching death was. Hence after the expression, 'and I was rescued from the lion's mouth,' this also, 'the Lord will rescue me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom,' indicating the martyrdom he would soon suffer; which he more clearly expresses in the same Epistle, 'for I am already poured out, and the time of my departure is at hand.' And indeed in this Second Epistle to Timothy he shows that Luke alone was with him when he wrote, but at his former defence not even he. Whence it is probable that Luke wrote his Acts of the Apostles about this time, continuing his history down to the time that he was with Paul. Thus much we have said to show that the martyrdom of the Apostle did not take place at that period of his stay at Rome when Luke wrote his history. It is, indeed, probable that as Nero was more disposed to mildness in the beginning, the defence of the Apostle's doctrine would be more easily received; but as he advanced to such criminal excesses as to disregard all right, the Apostles also, with others, experienced the effect of the measures pursued against them."¹ A little further on Eusebius says, "Paul is therefore said to have been beheaded at Rome."² Thus, at the will of a capricious madman, the great Apostle of the Gentiles ended his long career of suffering and of work, and by the sharp stroke of the headsman's sword entered into his rest. He rests from his labours, and his works do follow him, as his was one of the richest, fullest, most faithful lives that the world has ever seen.

¹ "Ecclesiastical History," p. 63. Translated by Rev. C. F. Cruse.

² Ibid. p. 68.

CHAPTER XV.

PAULINE THEOLOGY.

Pauline Theology : its sources, its nature—The Epistles of the Imprisonment—His relation to Christ—St. Paul not the Founder of Christianity.

IT is not intended to give anything like a full account of the teaching and doctrine of the Apostle, nor to estimate his place, rank, and influence in the spread of Christianity. Many treatises have been written on Pauline theology, and many attempts made to set forth his doctrine. And there is yet a great deal to be done ere we can be said fully to have mastered Paulinism. Our aim in this concluding chapter is to give such a brief account of his thoughts, his influence, and his character, as will fitly form the crown of the work.

We are inclined to think that most treatises on Pauline theology have erred from over-elaborateness, and from seeking too many sources and influences for his doctrine. As a typical example we may take Weiss, who begins his study of Paulinism as follows : "In consequence of his natural speculative genius, as well as of his rabbinico-dialectic training, Paul possessed the ability and the inclination to strike out a more sharply-defined mode of teaching, and to work it out into an almost systematic completeness."¹ Starting with this conception of the Apostle, we are not surprised to find that to Weiss speculation and Rabbinism play a considerable part in ascertaining and setting forth the doctrine of St. Paul. Others, again, find that the Apostle is an incipient Gnostic. It seems to me that the men who lay stress on these supposed traits of the Apostle's mind, are liable to make a great mistake, and are apt to overlook the great and decisive effect made on him by the manifestation to him of the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. From that

¹ "Biblical Theology," vol. i. p. 274. Clark's translation.

time Christ ruled not only his life, but also his thinking. And the secret of his theology is found, not in his speculative power, nor in his rabbinical training, nor in his dialectics, but in the conception he had formed of the Lord Jesus Christ. To him Christ was the motive of all right living; He was also the test of all true thinking. As we have said above,¹ Paul brought all speculative and all practical questions to the test of the Person and work of Christ. This held his speculative power in subordination; it kept his dialectics within limits; and in the hands of the Apostle it gave a ready answer to every perplexity. We saw him in the Epistles to the Corinthians apply it to solve problems of morality, church order, and doctrine. All his Epistles supply ready illustrations of this practice.

The most striking illustrations are found in the Epistles of the Captivity. These were written to people who represent a more advanced stage of thought and life than those to whom his other Epistles were addressed. Christian ideas had penetrated further, had obtained a deeper influence, and had come into closer relation with many thoughts and systems of Gentile origin. Many questions were thus raised, many foreign elements were brought into relation with the Gospel, and with these the Apostle had to deal. What he had to contend with at Colossæ, was something far more subtle and more fascinating than the Pharisaic Judaism which he refuted in the Epistle to the Galatians, and more profound than the moral and doctrinal questions he had to answer in the Epistles to the Corinthians. "The questions in which the Colossian heresy was interested lie at the very root of our Christian consciousness. The impulse was given to its speculations by an overwhelming sense of the unapproachable majesty of God, by an instinctive recognition of the chasm which separates God from man, from the world, from matter. Its energy was sustained by the intense yearning after some mediation which might bridge over this chasm, might establish intercommunion between the finite and the Infinite."² How shall the Apostle deal with speculations such as these? How shall he deal with the ascetic tendencies, with the longing after perfection, and with the other tendencies, speculative and practical, which are manifest in the Colossian Church? By counter-speculation? By processes of rabbinical dialectics? Nay, not so; but in the same manner as he dealt

¹ Page 126.

² Lightfoot on "Colossians," pp. 180-1.

with the Galatian and Corinthian troubles. He meets them by the conception of the Person of Christ. He unfolds that doctrine to meet the new issues. He shows that Christ is the Mediator between God and man. Vast as was the difference between God and man, wide and deep as was the chasm between the finite and the Infinite, yet there was no need of infinite grades of being to bridge the chasm. Christ was the only, He was also the all-sufficient Mediator. In a calm, authoritative way, not as if he was building up a speculation, but as one who has a firm footing on fact, the Apostle proceeds to tell them who Christ is, what the position of Christ in the universe is, and what His function and His work are. By this calm exposition and description of the Person of Christ he sets aside the "voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels" into which they were about to fall. They needed no man nor angel to stand between them and God, for they had Christ; and in Him they had redemption, and through Him they had access unto the Father. The answer to their speculative difficulties, the solution of their religious perplexities was as simple as it was beautiful. It was to tell them of Christ, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation: for in Him were all things created, in the heavens, and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."¹ So writes the Apostle, as if he were setting forth a simple statement of fact. No one need hesitate to say that if this be a true statement of Christ, and His cosmical position, it was a real answer to the questions and speculations of the Colossian heresy. What, however, we are here concerned with, is the constant practice of the Apostle of answering all questions by referring them to the doctrine of the Person of Christ.

Equally decisive in this respect is the Epistle to the Ephesians. In it the Apostle sets forth the whole economy of the New Covenant, "as something which was determined upon, and existed in the mind of God from the beginning, both as a whole and in its details. It lays down the doctrine of the uni-

¹ Col. i. 15-18.

versality of the plan which embraces all intelligent creatures, bridges the gulf between heaven and earth, and breaks down the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile, and then goes on to make specially prominent, above all else, the doctrine of election, with reference to those who actually attain to salvation."¹ But in the centre of the whole economy, both as the goal to which it moves, and as the source from which it springs, is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the goal, for God has summed up "all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth."² He is also the source of this great Divine plan, for, apart from Him, it could be neither formed nor realised. In Him also are the power and the means by which this great Divine purpose can be translated into fact. So the Apostle exhorts them to cling to Christ, because in Him alone are found the treasures of knowledge and of wisdom, they have vainly sought elsewhere. He is the power of God and the wisdom of God. In Christ alone could be seen "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come : and He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."³ Thus by Christ and through Him men are put in possession of the Divine power and grace which raise them to a new life, and secure to them fulness of knowledge and indwelling in God. It is vain and useless for them to seek elsewhere for any of these possessions, which they can find in Christ alone. For the satisfaction of their intellectual striving after knowledge, for the assuaging of their thirst after truth, and for the gratification of their desire for fulness of life, the Ephesians need not seek elsewhere ; all they need they shall find in Christ, truth for the intelligence, guidance for the will, life for the heart.

We must be brief, but what has been said will suffice to show how this main thought of his theology is set by the Apostle in the forefront, and how the doctrine of the Person of Christ is

¹ Reuss, "History of the New Testament," p. 112, Clark's translation.

² Eph. i. 10.

³ Ibid. i. 19-23.

for him the key to the solution of every problem of life and duty. What we find in these Epistles of the Imprisonment is in harmony with the contents of the other Epistles. It is but the application of his universal principle to questions which had not emerged previously ; and the application is made at once, and with a firm, unfaltering hand. He simply restates the doctrine, and the result is seen at once. We may indeed rejoice that the emergency arose which called for the re-statement of the doctrine. For the re-statement gives us elements of the doctrine, and of the cosmical and universal significance of Christ, without which our theology would have been all the poorer. As it is we have learned Christ, and we know somewhat of His significance in relation to the Father, and to the mind, and to man. In Christ all men may "see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." ¹

It is a task which might easily be accomplished, to place all the distinctive teaching of the Apostle in due relation to this leading thought. What he teaches about God and about man ; all his significant words and phrases, such as flesh, spirit, sin, righteousness, salvation and redemption, law, grace, fall into rank, order, and due subordination in the light of the doctrine of the Person of Christ. If we separate these words from the great central fact which fills the Apostle's mind, if we treat them as merely abstract doctrines—as has so frequently been done—we shall both misunderstand his teaching and misrepresent his meaning. Take the doctrine, or the words in which the Apostle states his doctrine, out of this relation, and they easily become untrue. For with St. Paul there are really no abstract doctrines, all his doctrines are expressions of the relations in which Christ stands. Take the doctrine of justification, and inquire as to its meaning and working. What is it as conceived and set forth by the Apostle ? He had himself tried with all his might to attain to righteousness. He had striven to rise to the legal standard, and he had failed. The law, in its purity and breadth, had condemned him ; yea, the more holy, Divine, and

¹ Eph. iii. 9, 11.

good, the law was recognised by him to be, the worse for him. Righteousness, by keeping the law, was unattainable. All at once Christ came to him, and lifted him into a new world, and for the Apostle all things became new. He was in a world in which righteousness came down from heaven, and in which forgiveness was freely given. To him, struck down with blindness, amid the shattered ruins of his old life came the word of Christ, telling him that Christ Jesus had come into the world to save sinners; that in Christ he had redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of his sins; that acceptance, peace, and assurance of the love of God belonged to him, when he belonged to Christ; and the Apostle, believing these things, became a new man, in a new world. In Christ he saw the meaning and purpose of God, in creation, in history, and in grace, and he girded himself to the task of making them known to men. Both in his own experience and in his teaching this principle of righteousness through Christ stands in the forefront. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."¹ They are in Christ, surrounded by love, encompassed by mercy. And for them the past with its sting, fear, and condemnation, is gone, and they are done with it.

For life and work in the present, and for all the trials of the future, the Apostle had Christ. Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, were assured to him, since he had Christ as companion, guide, and friend. The good work begun would not be left incomplete, for Christ had the work in hand, and "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses."² He had security, then, that the sinful nature within him would be overcome, and the flesh, with all its tendencies and lusts, would be subdued, and he would be more than conqueror through Christ that loved him. It all lay in Christ; and Paul bowed himself in loving adoration of the truth and grace and love of Christ. With real gladness, with a wonder that ever grew, he laid hold of Christ, and with the reception of Christ he felt that he had received all things—salvation, redemption, righteousness. All his being set to Christ. His thinking, his feeling, his power of will, were all ruled by Christ, and he yielded himself without reserve to that gracious influence. Every desire, every aspiration, every thought of the Apostle, are in subjection to Christ; and the consciousness

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19.

² Rom. viii. 1.

that he belongs to Christ is never absent from him. It finds vent in faith, love, loyalty, worship, adoration, and in measureless obedience. We need not quote the words which express this attitude of the Apostle to his Master. It is as conspicuous in his earlier, as it is in his later Epistles, and, in fact, it is the feature of his Apostolic life.

The Apostle never separates what Christ taught from what Christ is. For the Apostle, as in truth for all Christians, this is impossible. Other masters may give us their systems in an impersonal way, and we may get all that they can give us, though we know nothing of their personality. But Christ is the truth he teaches, and apart from Him, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we cannot have this highest truth. Now St. Paul is emphatic on this point; emphatic not only in his practice, but also in his teaching. All doctrines are but expressions of what Christ is, and of what are His relations to God, to man, and to the world. All sin, all evil, is but resistance to Christ, or opposition to Him, and, in truth all the Apostle's teaching may be duly arrayed in relation to this central thought.

It would lead us too far afield to ask the question how the Apostle received this impression of Christ, and to inquire into the relation between the Christ set forth in the Gospels, and the Christ set forth in the Epistles of St. Paul. We refer to the matter here because it has been most widely discussed, and has led to many strange results. Into these we shall not enter here. I shall only say, at present, that there is no contrariety between the Christ of the Gospels and the Christ of Paul. Nor is Paul's conception of Christ the result of any mere dialectic process on his part; nor is there any difference between the conception of Christ as set forth in the earlier and in the later Epistles of the Apostle. The unique position, the sinless character, and the other features of the Christ, are as apparent in Thessalonians as they are in Colossians. The only difference is that the more developed nature of the questions discussed and the difficulties present to the Apostle's mind led him to give a fuller statement of the doctrine of the Person of Christ in the later Epistles than he had given in the earlier ones. But evidently to the Apostle himself the fuller statement was no speculative deduction, nor was a statement of fact revealed to him. To us, therefore, who believe that the Apostle was divinely guided in what he taught,

his statements become facts, and are to be made the basis of our faith, life, and thought. For the Pauline view of Christ is in no way the product of speculation. It is rooted in history. St. Paul delights to give the very words of Christ, as he does, for example, in his account of the institution of the Lord's Supper—"I have received of the Lord that which also I have delivered to you ;"¹ or in his speech to the elders of Ephesus—"It is more blessed to give than to receive."² He lays strong emphasis on the facts of Christ's historical life, on the deeds which Christ did, on the lowly circumstances in which His life was spent, on the death He died, on His resurrection and ascension, and on the work which Christ continues to do. "Still the Christ of Paul is the Lord who met him by the way. It is Christ dead, risen, and ascended ; it is Christ with the reason and the result of His finished work made plain ; it is Christ with no vail now on the deep and wonderful relation He sustains to men that live by Him ; Christ with the significance for believers of all His wonderful history shining out from Him ; Christ *vestitus Evangelio*. In the Gospels we see Christ in the flesh of His humiliation, under the limits to which He submitted, that He might share our state and bear our burdens ; we see Him in the pathways of a Jewish life revealing a perfect goodness and a perfect dignity ; also we see Him full of a wonderful purpose of good-will to men, which He bears to them from His Father ; it overflows in His words and works, and in the prosecution of it He moves on to die. But now He has gone up above all worlds. No longer is He hedged about by the necessities of mortal life ; no longer tied by earthly bonds to some places and some men, and one nation. He is glorified ; all fulness dwells in Him ; in Him all the purposes of God are seen to centre."³

We ought also to remember the way and manner in which St. Paul's teaching was given to the world. It was given in no systematic way. It was occasional ; and both form and matter were determined by the needs of the hour. His Epistles were written to individual Churches or persons. Questions had been asked ; difficulties had arisen ; tidings had been brought to the Apostle of the existence of doubts and perplexities within the

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 23.

² Acts xx. 35.

³ Principal Rainy, on Paul the Apostle. "Evangelical Succession," vol. i. pp. 29. 30.

Church ; or he was informed that some Churches had erred in faith, or had fallen into sin ; and his immediate object in almost every Epistle was to set them right. The situations which he looked at were definite, limited in time and space, determined by the moral, intellectual, and spiritual condition of the Churches. Much of what he wrote bore directly on the needs of his own time. But these are regarded by him in the light of eternity. Even his passing remarks, drawn from him by the occasion, have no mere temporal or occasional mark on them. They shine with a light which is more than temporal, because of his habit of referring all his thoughts to their eternal ground and reason. His views and decisions have, therefore, a direct bearing on all kinds of questions, and give to us principles of conduct which afford guidance to every age and in all sorts of circumstances. His way of dealing with questions makes it easy for us to disentangle the permanent principle from its occasional and temporary setting. From him, and from his writings, we may see how the new Christian principle of loyalty to Christ acts in all spheres of human activity. We may see it in its power of renewing the heart and transforming the character of those who give it full and free scope. We may see it setting a man in direct and permanent hostility to sin in all its forms and effects ; setting in motion a warfare which shall never cease until the whole man is set free from sin, and lives according to the law of the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus. We may see it give a new colour and tone to all the relations of life in which a man stands to his fellow men, to the world, and to God. Such a picture of the new man might easily be drawn from the Epistles of the Apostle.

The historical significance of St. Paul and his work lies in his relation to Jesus Christ. His estimate of himself is that he is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the tendency of modern critical inquiry is to enhance the significance of St. Paul, and to make him in effect the author of Christianity. The practice is almost universal. From Baur to Pfleiderer, amid all the differences in detail which characterise the various attempts to account for the origin of Christianity, this is common to them all ; attention is concentrated on St. Paul, and the Person and work of Christ are allowed to fall into the background. Christianity is turned into a process which seems somehow to have begun after Christ. The most con-

spicuous example of this tendency we find in Pfleiderer's "Urchristenthum." His method is to ascertain from the genuine Epistles of St. Paul what is his conception of Christianity, and then to show how this conception governs all the other documents of the New Testament. Whether we consider the acknowledged writings of St. Paul, or deal with the Gospels, or with any of the other books of the New Testament, we never (according to Pfleiderer) get beyond the influence of the Apostle, or the influence of the tendency which he set in motion. We never get near to the historical Christ, for His teaching and His work have come down to us in the form and colour given them by the Apostle of the Gentiles. It is impossible to say, on this theory, whether we really have any true account of the historical Christ. We have from Pfleiderer a history of ideas. St. Paul came somehow to have a conception of the risen Christ, which is set forth in his acknowledged Epistles. When this conception became current in the Church she set herself to obtain for it a local habitation and a name. The Gospel of Mark is the first attempt to translate into fact the theological conception of St. Paul. Then there resulted a two-fold process. On the one hand the theological conception of Paul grew from more to more, until it culminated in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, wrongly ascribed to the Apostle, and on the other hand the process of translating into fact the growing conceptions of the Church, went on with an equal pace. The Gospels, Mark, Luke, Matthew, John, are the successive stages of the process of translation into fact. Whosoever wishes, may see the twofold process described at length in the pages of "Urchristenthum."

Adequately to criticise the theory is impossible here. The result is to give us a Christianity without Christ. We have ideas in abundance, but we have no facts. Ideas are first, and the facts, or what people were wont to believe to be facts, are simply symbolic, the time-vesture of the idea. There is no reason given by Pfleiderer why the process should have begun; nor any reason why it stopped short, when it did. There is no account - no explanation of the creative personality of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor of the influence which He exerted on the Apostle of the Gentiles. The whole business has an air of unreality. It looks as if the theory could have been elaborated nowhere except in a heated class-room, or within the cloistered

walls of a university, apart from the healthy conditions of common every-day life. It is the day-dream of a student, who has never come into contact with reality, and who does not know by what motives men are really actuated. Ideas do not make facts. The consciousness of the Church did not create Christ : it was Christ who made the consciousness of the Church. The task imposed by theories of this kind on the Christian consciousness is of the most transcendental sort. The work ascribed to the Church is nothing less than the creation of the sublime figure of the Christ. According to Pfleiderer we may trace the steps of the process, and observe the successive stages by which the great character of the Lord Jesus Christ was built up. For the words put into His mouth, and the deeds said to be done by Him, are but the reflections of the age and surroundings of the various writers of the New Testament documents. Suppose for a moment that this is possible, our task of explaining the origin of Christianity is only begun. What is the explanation of the Christian consciousness? How came it to be, and to appear at the time when it did? How did the Christian consciousness of the First Century attain to the unique position it has since occupied in history? How did it become the norm, the test, and the standard of Christian consciousness to the present hour? It would need also to be explained how the Christian consciousness is so elevated, so pure, so full of spiritual insight, as it is expressed in the canonical documents of the New Testament, and how it is so thin, and poor, and uncertain, as set forth in all other extant Christian literature of the first two Centuries. These are questions which press on all men who strive to account for Christianity apart from Christ. If we accept the character of Christ, His work, and His historical position, as these are set forth in the New Testament, then the problem becomes one that may be solved. Christ explains Christianity, explains also the Christian consciousness. In itself the Christian consciousness is quite inexplicable on grounds of ordinary human experience. We get a sufficient account of the origin of Christianity, when we say that it sprang from the creative personality of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is there any plausibility in the statement that the Apostle of the Gentiles was the real author of Christianity? No ; for great as the Apostle is, he is not equal to the burden thus laid

upon him ; he is not great enough to be the founder of Christianity. He has his limitations and his imperfections ; and in all respects he comes immeasurably short of the stature of his Master. In the writings of the Apostle we find nothing of that sympathy with and insight into nature of which the words of Jesus Christ are so full. St. Paul lives in the world of men. City life seems to be the only kind of life he understands, and the country seems to be a space to be swiftly passed over as he hurries on from city to city. How different was it with the Master. While His sympathy with men, their occupations and pursuits, are as great, nay greater than those of His servant, He manifests a range of sympathy with nature, a sphere into which St. Paul never enters. "In the domain of nature," as Keim finely says, "His observations were full of deep thought and fine discernment ; from the splendid white fragrant lily, as He depicts it in His Sermon on the Mount ; the hen with passionate maternal love clucking to gather its young beneath the shelter of its wide-spread wings ; the birds of the air drawing for their sustenance on the world's great store, free from consuming care ; the lambs blithely following their shepherd, yet going astray and roaming in the wild,—to the fox, that in the thicket builds his haunt and home : still more, by far, mankind—the games of the young in the market place, the wedding processions of the grown, the castles of princes, and the silken court costumes of the magnates of Tiberias, as well as the field employ of the sower and the vine-dresser, the sweat of the labourer, the sighs of prisoners in chains. Nor did He step on the surface ; in the light of their possessions, their joys and griefs, of their speeches and their deeds, He interpreted mankind, and noted with the self-same sharpness of discrimination the goodness of heart which comes out in the circle of human society, and the race and chase of greed, of ambition, of lust and selfishness, of stormy wrath and humoursome vexation."¹ Of this breadth and variety of interest in nature there is no trace in the writings of the Apostle. Nor do we find much of it in any set of people until we come to times quite recent. And this aspect of the teaching of Christ remained almost unappreciated until the modern feeling for external nature arose. And now people are beginning to understand the bearing of the Christ in the presence of the

¹ Keim, "Jesus of Nazara," vol. ii. p. 169.

works of God, and to understand the truth that Christ is the Contemporary and the Teacher of every age.

In other ways, too, St. Paul falls short of the universality of the Master. The difference is as manifest, when we consider the bearing and demeanour of the two in their relations to man and to God, as it is in their relation to nature. Both in Christ and in St. Paul we find compassion for men, sympathy with men, good will to men, help for men, but how different are the modes of their manifestation. How perfect is the expression of Christ's compassion for men ! How calm and sovereign His manifestations of happiness ! With what delight He brings His sympathy and His help to the most needy and the most sinful ! How eagerly He seeks to awaken in them such a disposition of heart and mind as would make it possible for Him to help them ! With what forgetfulness of self does He labour for them ! Truly He saves others, and Himself He did not save. It would do injustice to the Apostle to compare Him with his Master. For in the presence of the true, perfect, and complete manhood of our Lord, and in comparison with His perfect ways of showing sympathy, compassion, and helpfulness, the ways of other men must always appear broken and imperfect. In truth, St. Paul's ways of being all things to all men, while true and characteristic, yet form a contrast to the perfect action of Jesus. They lack the breadth, the universality, and the sovereign freedom of Jesus Christ.

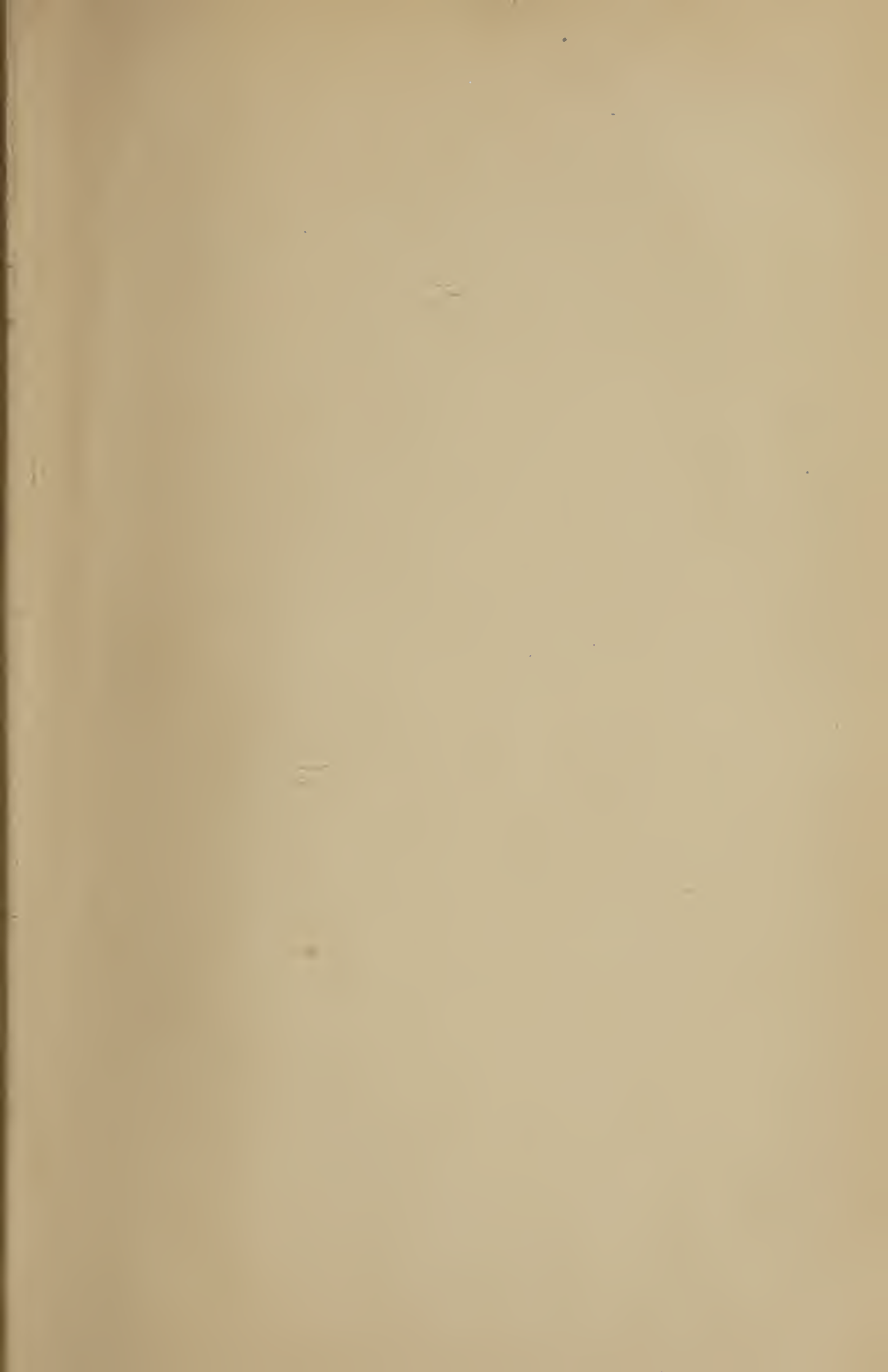
There is also a marked difference in the way of speech between the Apostle and His Master. When Jesus speaks, He speaks as one having authority. He speaks out of the depths of His insight into men and things. He speaks straight to the heart of man, and His words find men, and enter into the mind and heart of people of every land, of every age and condition. Christ speaks with simple Divine calmness ; His words are the words of a Master, who does not seem laboriously, as other men do, to join proposition to proposition in order to reach truth, but who, without effort, states at once the essential truth of the matter in hand. His mode of speech is so simple, so calm, that it is only on reflection that men come to see how profound and universal their meaning is. What a contrast to the passionate vehemence, the rugged reasoning, the involved and difficult argumentation of the Apostle ! St. Paul seems often to be under the necessity of writing to make his meaning clear to him-

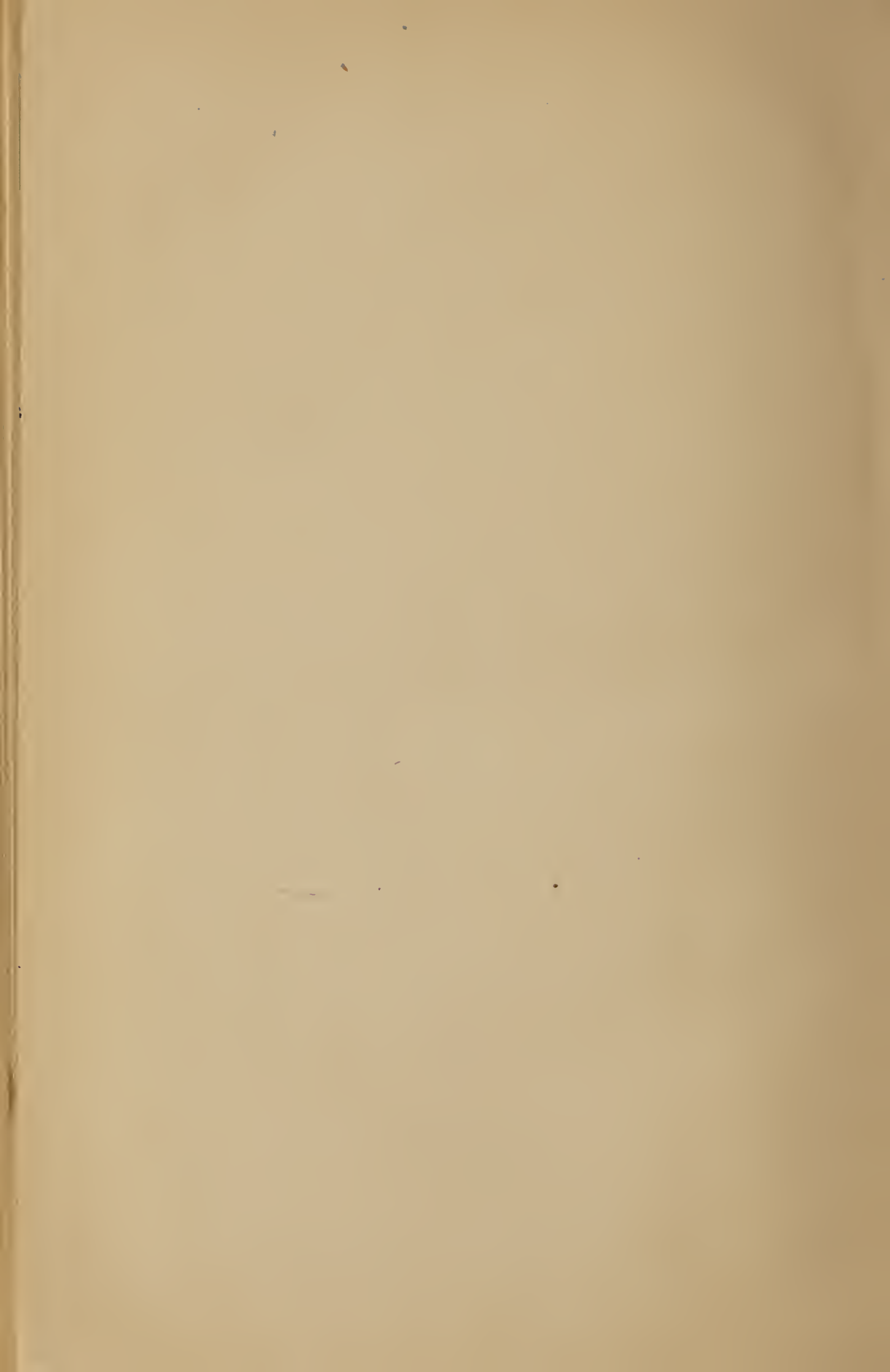
self. But the Master always speaks with authority, and His words are, in short, Divine. We feel that Christ Jesus has the secret of another and a higher world, and He speaks of what He has known, and testifies of what He has seen. He makes manifest that He is in perfect harmony with the Divine order He came to reveal. He can tell men of the Father. He is Himself the truth He teaches. Christ is great with a greatness we can apprehend but never fully understand.

We are able to measure the greatness of the Apostle. It is of a kind akin to that of other men. He has none of the calm simplicity, nothing of the breadth and universality of his Master. He is conscious all through his life that he has erred, failed, and has been saved from himself and his failure. He is full of self-condemnation, and yet more full of a passionate gratitude that must find vent for itself in the devotion of a whole life. He is the servant of Another; He does not belong to himself. He feels that he owes himself, and all that is his, to Christ. All he possesses he has by the grace of Christ. His faith, his hope, his place in the unseen world, his assurance of salvation, his work here, all depend on Christ and his relation to Christ. In the presence of Christ we feel that we have to do with One who has not to attain, or to become perfect. Christ is in full possession of all His powers. But in the presence of the Apostle we feel we have to do with one who has to struggle, to fight the good fight of faith, who knows in his own life what sin and failure mean, and who has learnt the blessedness of repentance, faith, and forgiveness. Great as St. Paul is, his is not the greatness of the founder of a religion. From first to last he gives only what he has received. He is one who has been much forgiven; and he strives with all his strength to lead others to Jesus Christ. As he says, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."¹

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 5.

THE END.





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